POWER FAILURE

by CHARLES SHEFFIELD

fantastic

Stories

April
1978
$1.25
UK:60P
ICD 08288

David R. Bunch • Arsen Darnay • Brad Lang
Lisa Tuttle & Steven Utley • Dave Bischoff
Barry N. Malzberg • James Sallis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are all within your grasp when you know

"How to cash in on the gold that lies hidden in your handwriting!"

By ROGER RUBIN, World-Famous Graphologist

Yes, a Personalized Analysis of your Handwriting can open all kinds of doors for you! It can help you enjoy a life that's Fuller, Richer and More Exciting than you ever imagined!

It can help you to:

- Develop more Self-Confidence
- Be more Successful in your career
- Make more money
- Increase your appeal with the opposite sex
- Attain more sexual pleasure
- Be a popular and happier person

And that's not all! . . .

An Expert Analysis of your Handwriting can often reveal Skills, Aptitudes, Talents and Abilities you may not have been aware of before! It can awaken that "Sleeping Giant" within you and make your life everything you've always wanted it to be!

Money, Love, Power, Status—all are within your grasp when you know how to use the fantastic knowledge that lies hidden in your handwriting.

When you know yourself through Handwriting Analysis you will suddenly realize that you have a wealth of untapped Mental Powers that can take you as far as you want to go in life! You'll know how to make the right moves—often in the most crucial situations—especially at those times when there's no room for second guessing!

With such a powerful knowledge of yourself, you could avoid making disastrous mistakes—now and in the future—and experience **Greater Confidence, Peace of Mind** and **Real Happiness!** It can help you be more decisive in matters of Finance, Love, Marriage and other important areas of your life! And you can enjoy these astonishing benefits from the very first day you receive an expert analysis of your handwriting from PSYCHOMETRIC HANDWRITING SERVICE!

Handwriting analysis is accepted as a proven science throughout Europe!

In many countries throughout the world, handwriting analysis is recognized as a proven scientific method. It is used by government, modern industry, the medical profession and other organizations as a reliable approach to determining personality and character traits of men and women. Law enforcement authorities have used it successfully in their criminal investigations.

Read what other psychometric customers are saying:

"I've had five different handwriting analyses done. Although some were accurate, they were never complete. I had Psychometric Handwriting Service analyze my handwriting. To my amazement, they were 95% accurate in their findings which helped me get a better-paying job." *Marsha Huckeba, Calif.*

"Through handwriting analysis, I discovered a new way for accurate determination of my personality traits. I couldn't believe that I could gain self-improvement through graphotherapy. I was able to break undesirable habits and replace them with desirable ones." *C.E. Jackson, Texas*

"I was never psychoanalyzed like this before. I've spent thousands on analysis and yet was never told that my under achievement was not due to lack of intelligence (which I thought) but rather to my lack of motivation which Psychometric Handwriting Service pointed out." *D. McWilliams, N.Y.*

Why you should have your handwriting analyzed now!

In today's complicated world, a knowledge of what your handwriting reveals can make a big difference in how you cope with inflation, your job and your finances. It can give you a decided edge over many circumstances and situations you may have to face. It can help give you the upper hand in dealing with others.

Yes, you really do have everything to gain by having a professional, Personalyzed Analysis of your handwriting done right away. It puts a BETTER, RICHER, MORE EXCITING LIFE - WITHIN YOUR EASY REACH! It directs you in becoming a MORE DYNAMIC, MORE APPEALING . . . MORE SUCCESSFUL YOU!

Why your handwriting reveals the real you . . .

Try writing an intelligent statement without keeping your mind on what you are writing. You'll find it virtually impossible! Your brain must guide your hand in writing the words you "see" in your mind. Your nervous system acts as the "wires" along which the messages of how to write will travel. So, stimulated by the brain, your muscular system is coordinated into a more or less writing movement. The handwriting that evolves is as personal as your fingerprints!

Here are just a few sample traits your handwriting tells about you:

- Your feelings about others and about yourself
- Your self-command and your passions
- Your skill, aptitudes, talents and abilities
- Your adaptability, will power and leadership qualities
- Your mental powers of understanding; firmness of character

Take action now - read it for 30 days - free!

Discover the treasures hidden in your handwriting! Learn what it can do to enrich your whole life - in a way you never dreamed possible. Simply fill out and follow the easy instructions in the coupon below and mail it TODAY - without delay! IF YOU'RE NOT 100% DELIGHTED WITH THE PROFESSIONAL, EYE-OPENING ANALYSIS OF YOUR HANDWRITING YOU RECEIVE - RETURN EVERYTHING WITHIN 30 DAYS FOR A 100% INSTANT CASH-BACK REFUND!

You have nothing to lose - so why not get your handwriting analyzed today? You'll be delighted you did and you'll gain a new insight into the "other" you! The choice is up to you. The rest is up to us!

© 1977 PSYCHOMETRIC HANDWRITING SERVICE

11 diane court nesconset ny 11767

MEET ROGER RUBIN - FAMOUS GRAPHOLOGIST

Mr. Rubin is a well-known professional graphologist and is a consultant to PSYCHOMETRIC HANDWRITING SERVICE. He lectures, teaches and writes on various aspects of handwriting analysis, is an officer and founding member of the internationally recognized National Society for Graphology. Mr. Rubin has an extensive educational background in psychology and his activities in graphology include: personnel consultant to a New York corporation, and working with guidance counsellors in the New York City schools. He also uses his handwriting expertise in giving vocational guidance to adults and youngsters.

ORDER WITH CONFIDENCE - 30-DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER

PSYCHOMETRIC HANDWRITING SERVICE, Dept. SFAG 378
11 DIANE COURT, NESCONSET, N.Y. 11767

TO ORDER: Using a pen (no pencil) - on an unlined piece of paper - write the following sentences. Be sure to include your signature:

"Mr. Rubin: I want to see if Handwriting Analysis will do what you promise it to do. I desire more success in my life - more money - more love - better sexual relationships - a more interesting, exciting life. It must be everything your ad promises - or I may return it within 30 days for a full refund. I am over 18."

Enclosed is $_____ in: ☐ Check ☐ Cash ☐ Money Order for:

☐ $20 PERSONALITY IN-DEPTH COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS - to isolate and qualify up to 260 psychographological character traits.

☐ $10.95 PERSONALITY PROFILE - 15 pages, up to 120 character traits - 2300 words.

OR: Please charge to my: ☐ MASTER CHARGE ☐ BANKAMERICARD

Account # _____

Expiration Date (month/year) _____

Master Charge Inter Bank No. _____

SIGNATURE _____

Mr.
Mrs.
Ms. _____
(please print carefully)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Check: ☐ MAN ☐ WOMAN ____ APPROX. AGE
☐ LEFT HANDED ☐ RIGHT HANDED

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fantastic
Science Fiction & Fantasy STORIES

ALL STORIES NEW & COMPLETE

APRIL, 1978 Vol. 27, No. 1

new novelets
POWER FAILURE
by CHARLES SHEFFIELD 6
WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD
by F.X. MILHAUS 60

new short stories
NEMESIS PLACE
by DAVID DRAKE 30
THE THREE-LEGGED CHICKEN
BY BRAD LANG 40
IN MEDIAS RES
by DAVID F. BISCHOFF 52
UNCOILING
by LISA TUTTLE & STEVEN UTLEY 100
THE GOLDEN FLEECE
by ARSEN DARNAY 106
MR. WHO?
by DAVID R. BUNCH 113
HERE, FOR JUST A WHILE
by BARRY N. MALZBERG 116
CHANGES
by JAMES SALLIS 121

new features
EDITORIAL **by TED WHITE** 4
ACCORDING TO YOU 126

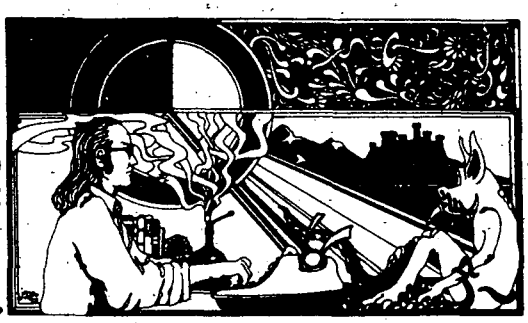
Cover copyright © 1978 by **STEVE FABIAN**
Illustrating: **POWER FAILURE**

SOL COHEN, Publisher
ARTHUR BERNHARD, Associate Publisher
TED WHITE, Editor
GRANT CARRINGTON, Associate Editor, Emeritus
TERRY HUGHES, Assistant Editor
J. EDWARDS, Art Director
PRINT ADVERTISING REP., REP., INC., Advertising Manager

FANTASTIC, Vol. 27, No. 1, April 1978 is published quarterly by ULTIMATE PUBLISHING CO. INC., 69-62 230 Street, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. Editorial Office: Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. $1.25 a copy. Subscription rates: One year (4 issues) United States and possessions: $5.00, Canada and Pan American Union countries and all other countries, $5.50. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions and other mail items are to be sent to Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. Second Class Postage paid at Flushing, N.Y. and at additional mailing office. Copyright 1978 by Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care, however, publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts. 165680

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TED WHITE editorial



ATTENTION ARTISTS: The following letter from Thomas Pomplun asks a number of good basic questions:

Dear Mr. White,

Just read your column on story submissions in the June '77 FANTASTIC, and am writing in the hope that you could do a similar piece for prospective artists. In particular, I would like to know:

1. Where should samples be sent? To the editorial offices, I would imagine, but addressed to you, to Mr. Cohen, or to J. Edwards?

2. What form should they be sent in? Original art, stats, photos, slides, or xeroxes?

3. Should b&w art be done only in single column and full page, or are horizontal layouts, spreads, spots, and vignettes acceptable?

4. Should only line art be submitted, or would you like to see b&w tone art as well?

5. How large over size should illustrations be done?

6. For cover art do you prefer oils and acrylics, or are watercolors, gouache, or pastels acceptable? On canvas, panel, or illustration board?

I would greatly appreciate it if you could answer these and any other questions that I have not covered in the editorial or letters columns of either AMAZING or FANTASTIC.

Dealing with Tom's questions, one by one:

1. Samples should be sent to me, at the Falls Church address at the head of the letter column. "J. Edwards" is a convenient fiction; he is me.

2. The form in which samples are sent depends to a good extent on yourself. However, in order to guard against possible post-office error, it's better to send stats or really clean xerox copies (or, in the case of color work, slides or transparencies).

Black-and-white samples are, after all, only samples. They give us an idea of what you can handle in the way of line and form, but will not be used by us. Color work, on the other hand, we consider for possible use on covers. For that reason, we prefer transparencies to slides; the latter lose detail and become grainy when blown up to cover-size. What I'm saying is, b-&-w samples are only samples—indications of what you can do—while color samples are considered submissions and may be purchased for use.

3. In terms of samples, b-&-w art can be in any shape or format, since we're looking at it solely in order to judge your suitability for assignments. Naturally, if we like your work and want to use you, the format for your actual illustration(s) will probably be our usual one-column format.

4. Line art is preferable, but we do use half-toned work on occasion, and if that's where you excell, let us see it.

5. In considering the actual size of original art, you should take into con-

(cont. on page 59)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MUSIC TO READ SF BY

Music guaranteed to send the imagination soaring. Music to take you into the same exciting new dimensions of time and place offered by writers like Heinlein, Asimov, and Clarke. Including film scores from such movies as *Fahrenheit 451*, this superb stereo recording is a $4.95 value. Now it is available exclusively to members of The Science Fiction Book Club at a big 40% saving — yours for just $2.95 when you join.

How the Club works:

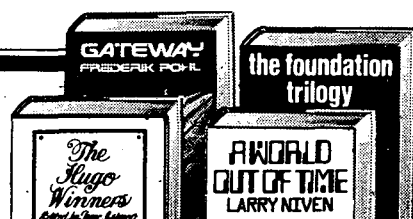
When your application for membership is accepted, you'll receive your introductory package of 4 books. (If you also want the record, check the appropriate box in the coupon below.) If not completely satisfied, you may return this introductory package in ten days' time — membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), we'll send you the Club's bulletin, describing the 2 coming Selections and a variety of Alternate choices. If you want both Selections, you need do nothing; they'll be shipped automatically. If you don't want a Selection, or prefer an Alternate, or no book at all, just fill out the convenient form always provided, and return it by the date specified. We try to allow you at least ten days for making your decision. If you don't get the form in time to respond within 10 days, and receive unwanted books, you may return them at our expense.

As a member you need take only 4 Selections or Alternates during the coming year. You may resign any time thereafter, or remain a member as long as you wish. At least one of the two Selections each month is only $1.98 plus shipping and handling. Other extra-value selections are slightly higher but always much less than Publishers' Editions. Send no money. But do send the coupon today.

ANY 4 BOOKS FOR 10¢ with membership

BONUS: Also take, if you wish, this $4.95 record value — now available exclusively to club members for just $2.95!



6221. **The Foundation Trilogy.** By Isaac Asimov. The ends of the galaxy revert to barbarism. An SF classic. Comb. Price $19.85

5041. **Star Wars:** From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker. By George Lucas. Life on a backwater planet can be dull, unless you become involved in an interstellar rebellion. Photos from the motion picture. Special Edition.

9043. **The Star Trek Concordance.** By Bjo Trimble. A must-have large-format paperback with summaries of every episode and a complete lexicon of Trekkish terms. Pub. ed. $6.95

7625. **The 1977 Annual World's Best SF.** Donald A. Wollheim, ed. The best SF published during 1976 by Asimov, Knight, Varley and others. Includes Tiptree's **Houston, Houston, Do You Read?** Special Edition.

4739. **Gateway.** By Frederik Pohl. Travel on alien ships to distant parts of the universe—with no guarantee of return. By the author of **Man Plus.** Pub. ed. $8.95

6320. **A World Out Of Time.** By Larry Niven. A black hole in space sends Jerome Corbell 3 million years into Earth's future where the ultimate battle of the sexes is raging. By co-author of **The Mote in God's Eye.** Pub. ed. $7.95

6080. **All My Sins Remembered.** By Joe Haldeman. A young man in search of excitement is sent to the danger spots of the galaxy. By the author of **Mindbridge.** Pub. ed. $7.95

2295. **The Sword of Shannara.** By Terry Brooks. A massive quest novel in the very best Tolkien tradition. Illustrated by the Brothers Hildebrandt. Pub. ed. $12.95

8532. **The Hugo Winners, Vol. I & II.** Giant 2-in-1 volume of 23 award-winning stories, 1955 to 1970. Asimov introduces each. Pub. ed. $15.45

7906. **The Ophiuchi Hotline.** By John Varley. Cloning, alien invaders, and a mysterious message from the depths of space—all in this outstanding SF story. **Explicit scenes and language may be offensive to some.** Pub. ed. $8.95

7633. **A Heritage of Stars.** By Clifford D. Simak. 500 years after Earth has reverted to a primitive society, one man is driven to reach for the stars. Pub. ed. $7.95

7518. **The Starchild Trilogy.** By Frederik Pohl and Jack Williamson. Conceived as a trilogy and together here for the first time are 3 classic tales, **The Reefs of Space, Starchild and Rogue Star.** Special edition.

The Science Fiction Book Club offers its own complete hardbound editions sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save members even more. Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Toronto. Offer slightly different in Canada.

Science Fiction Book Club 45-S140
Dept. PR013, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

Please accept my application for membership in the Science Fiction Book Club.

Send me, as a beginning, the 4 books whose numbers I have indicated below, and bill me just 10¢ (plus shipping and handling). I agree to purchase 4 additional books at regular low club prices during the coming year and may resign anytime thereafter. I agree to the Club Plan as described in this advertisement. SFC books are selections for mature readers.

☐ Send me, in addition, GREAT SCIENCE FICTION FILM MUSIC and bill me just $2.95 plus shipping and handling.

Mr.
Mrs. _____
Miss _____
Please print

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If under 18 parent must sign. Order not valid without signature.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charles Sheffield, whose "We Hold These Truths To Be Self-Evident" appeared here last issue, is one of the very best of the new writers in our field. This story, which concerns a young man growing up in strangely difficult times, will enhance Sheffield's already rising reputation.

POWER FAILURE

CHARLES SHEFFIELD

Illustrated by STEVE FABIAN

THE WINDOW had been wedged open at the bottom, about six inches. Outside, a great bed of lupins was attracting every bee in the area. Summer bird-songs and the smell of new-mown hay, slipping in through the open window, were an irresistible distraction, and the dark-haired ten-year old sitting at the desk near the back of the room had drifted off, deep in his own thoughts. The lesson went on, dryly analyzing sentence structure.

"Carl! Pay attention. I asked you to do the next example." The teacher was a slim, grey-haired woman in her late forties. Her tone was firm, but tolerant and good-humored. She had seen many children and understood the lure of blue skies and warm grass too well to be surprised by summer dreaming.

Startled, the boy looked down at his book. As he hesitated a triple chime sounded from the big television screen set above the center of the classroom podium.

The teacher looked at the wall clock. "Saved by the bell, eh, Carl? Close your books now, everyone," she said as the screen began to glow. "I'll be starting with you tomorrow, Carl—so make sure you know where we are by then."

The television screen was alive, and the voice from it cut into her final words.

"Science two, lesson twelve. Hello, children, Redman's blessing be on all of us. In today's lesson we will learn more about *atoms*. Yesterday we learned the basic fact, that all matter is made up of atoms. Perfectly hard, indivisible particles, so tiny that they cannot be seen, even with our best microscopes.

"Nothing smaller than an atom can ever exist. They are the building blocks from which everything in the world is made. Today we will talk about the way that atoms can combine to make other objects, called *molecules*. Here is a picture of a simple molecule, containing just three atoms . . .

The teacher glanced again at the boy by the window. His day-dream had gone, and he was watching and listening with total absorption. She looked for a few moments longer, then took out the monthly Church report and made the first check in the red square on Carl Denning's file. The separation of sheep and goats had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

begun. Behind her on the screen Dalton's atomic theory and its consequences continued. Final truth, unarguable, blessed by the Church of Redman.

". . . discovered three hundred years ago, in 1807, by the great scientist Davy. Write down these formulae and memorize them tonight. Caustic soda: one atom of sodium, one atom of oxygen, and one atom of hydrogen. It is written like this . . ."

" '. . . THE WORLD . . . hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain; and we are here as on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night.'

"Matthew Arnold's despairing words have more truth now than when they were first written, a hundred and fifty years ago. What kind of world have we fashioned—where one fifth of the species we call *homo sapiens* choose suicide as preferable to life, where a fourth of the remainder are undergoing treatment for mental illness, where the rest need tranquillizing drugs to drag them from one day to the next?

"The world was not always thus; and, I assert, the world need not be thus. Happiness *is* possible, not for the few but for the many. Not by mysticism, but by the application of clearly defined procedures . . ."—from 'Fundamental Attitudes in Human Society, 1625 to 2025', by Jahangir Redman.

AT SEVENTEEN, Carl found life more enjoyable and interesting. With grammar lessons far in the past, school work was a constant stimulation. But sometimes, like today, it could also be bewildering.

There were no outside distractions as he struggled with his analysis, only a faint sound of the wind. Winter was in command, deep snow lay outside, and the windows were opaque with delicate patterns of ice crystals. Each year it was a little colder, the summers a little shorter. Carl had learned the reason in his classes on meteorology. The solar constant was down by a tiny amount and the earth had moved into a minor ice age, like the one in the seventeenth century. They had looked at the old Brueghel paintings of snowy European winters, and studied the centuries-long changes in solar activity.

The teachers had explained it in detail, history as a function of climatic change. Here, a small decrease in the sun's output had frozen out the Viking colonies in south-west Greenland, stopping the westward exploration and leaving a place in history for Columbus. Here, harsh winters had driven the Indian tribes south from the Dakotas, to a permanent resettlement in milder climes. Further back, a period of high solar activity and the existence of a land bridge across the Bering Strait had made possible the first migrations into North America.

The chill now was mainly psychological, the feeling of living in a bleak era. The growing season was shorter by five days than fifty years ago, but the prediction was for a steady increase in solar activity now, and warmer weather in another twenty years. There was no problem with power. Electricity was abundant and cheap, and the rare frosts helped to keep summer insect pests under control.

Carl's problems today did not concern the weather. He paced the corridor outside the lab, waiting for the free question period. At seventeen,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he had reached full height but not weight, a tall, pale, intense youth, thin-limbed and angular. A beard, dark as his hair, had already progressed to the point where he shaved twice a week—secretly, to avoid the jibes of his class-mates. The Church's selection processes had brought Carl to this school after four previous screenings. He knew that his fellow-students were more inquisitive, quicker and less receptive to pat answers, but he had yet to correlate that with the Church edicts that each year decided his school.

"All right, Carl, what's the problem today?" Mr. Nielsen showed no trace of his Scandinavian ancestry. He was small, balding, hook-nosed and pointed-chinned, and his teaching matched his appearance—dry, precise, and brooking no argument. He had no time for uncertainty. The inside of his mind held no shades of grey, just black and white facts and an invincible confidence in their correctness.

"I'm having trouble understanding the recent work, sir. At least, I understand it in pieces, but I can't put them together."

Carl saw Nielsen's look of incomprehension. He knew he had to make this as clear as he could. "You see, last year we did Newton's laws and Newtonian dynamics, and that made perfect sense."

Mr. Nielsen raised his eyebrows. "I should hope so, Denning. It is, as I hope you realize, one of the great truths on which the wonderful edifice of modern science is erected."

His tone was critical and unsympathetic. Carl hurried on. "Yes, sir, and this year we did Maxwell's equations, and they made sense too. At least, I thought they did. Then yesterday I started to look at what happens if you accelerate something up to the speed of light—just keep on applying a constant force, and use Newton's second law of motion. The answers you get are ridiculous, if you believe that Maxwell's equations can be used to describe the behavior of light waves."

He stopped. Mr. Nielsen was frowning and shaking his head. "You are being caught in an old trap, Denning. Newton's laws and Maxwell's equations both form part of the eternal truths of the world. But the attempt to *combine* them, as you did, is a meaningless exercise. Why should you be able to do so?"

Carl flushed. "If they are all part of Nature, they must be consistent with each other, mustn't they?"

Nielsen smiled. "They are consistent, and fit God's great scheme. But there is no reason why you should be able to apply results from one to the other, as you seem to be trying to do." He settled back in his seat, then spoke again in kinder tones. "You see, Carl, truths may be distinct and absolute, standing in their own right. You must go and think about these things in more depth, until the relationship of our knowledge to the world we live in becomes more clear to you."

After Carl had left the room, dejected and thoroughly confused, Mr. Nielsen reached into his desk and took out the Church Manual. It was as he had thought. The situation called for a full report, in person. He put on boots, a heavy coat, scarf, gloves and hat, and prepared to slog uphill through the snow to the bleak Mission, outlined above against the gunmetal sky.

"SOUND AND VIDEO ON. Mr. Nielsen, please give us your report."

The speaker was heavy-set and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

black-bearded, clad in the white uniform of the priesthood. He and his companion, a slight, fair-haired man, listened to the report, then asked detailed questions. Nielsen, his fingers too cold to unbutton his coat, and shivering in the unheated, stone-floored room, answered with chattering teeth. At last he was allowed to go, back into the harsh, gathering darkness of the late afternoon.

As he left, the fair-haired priest locked the door and rubbed his hands together. "Damn cold today, Jason. Get the infra-red on in here, before I freeze. Let's hope Nielsen doesn't get frostbite on the way back to the school."

His companion threw a wall switch and the radiant heaters concealed in the roof beams came on at once. "Don't worry about him," he replied. "Get me some coffee, and let's have some brandy in it. Though I must admit it would be a nuisance to have to replace Nielsen, he's so perfect for the job he does. *He's* convinced he's doing the most important job in the world. Anyway, Luis, what did you think of his report?"

The fair-haired Luis turned from the wall cupboards, holding two steaming mugs in one hand and a bottle in the other. "Denning's coming on fast, Jason. Too fast, if you ask me. We'll have to recruit him a year early, by the look of it. He's beginning to get a smell of relativistic effects, and we don't want him spreading any of those ideas around the town." He poured hefty shots of brandy into the two mugs. "He won't accept Nielsen's views for much longer."

Jason took one of the mugs and sipped it thoughtfully. "Pity, really. I'd like to have Denning finish this course before we take him—it's an awkward time to have to begin training him at the Center." He rubbed at his black beard with a powerful, square hand. "How about if we make sure he sees a burning?—that should keep him quiet for a while."

"None scheduled here for a few months. Hold on a minute, Jason." Luis went to the wall computer and keyed the event data service. "There's one two weeks from now in Lukon. That should be near enough—it's not more than forty miles north. We'll need to fix up a reason for Denning to be up there."

"Easy enough. We'll have him visit the science museum there and arrange for him to get stranded." He placed his mug back on the wall table. "Your turn to make the arrangements. And I'll bet you one thing, Luis. I bet we have to do something more about Denning before the year is over, burning or no burning. I've seen him, and I think he's moving fast enough to reject all the usual answers long before that. We'd better face it, Luis, Denning's a good deal smarter than either of us."

Luis scowled. "He's not eighteen yet. I'll take that bet. I don't think he's all that unusual."

As he spoke, the two men entered the elevator that carried them below ground level to the electronic heart of the Mission. They didn't give a second thought to Nielsen, still struggling back downhill to the school. Outside, the temperature was dropping steadily, already well below freezing and heading down for thirty below. The night was clear, with an ice halo circling the full moon. The radio messages from the Mission went out to the northern mountains, where Vega burned blue-white above the Lukon Pass, and on to the Processing Center beyond.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gone back to Briarsford? Already? But I was told to be here at five o'clock, for a five-thirty return." Carl held out the paper he was carrying.

The uniformed attendant shook his head. "Showing me the paper won't help. Four-thirty, the hovercraft leaves, every other day. There's no other way of getting there while the snow lasts. You're stuck here in Lukon until Monday, and that's something I can't change."

"But I've got no money, and nowhere to stay. I'll freeze to death, or starve."

The older man laughed. "We're not quite that barbaric here, you know. In Redman's name, what do you take us for? Mr. Nielsen asked me to keep an eye out for you, and you're to stay at the Church Hostel. It's about a mile from here, on the road past the big square. And here's a food voucher for you, compliments of Lukon. If I were you, I'd spend my time worrying about what they'll be saying to you when you get back there. Mr. Nielsen says it's the first time they've lost a boy in fifty visits to the Science Museum. How come you got separated from the rest?"

"I'm doing a special report on hydroelectric power for a school project. They left me off in the power section when the rest of them went on to the biology exhibits." Carl took the food voucher and slipped it into a pocket of his greatcoat. "That report was Mr. Nielsen's idea, anyway."

The attendant shrugged. "Mix-up somewhere, that's for sure. You'd better get over to the Hostel now, while it's not too cold. There's supposed to be a thaw tonight, but I don't feel any signs of it yet. Here, I'll point you the way."

Carl walked over the crackling, blackened ice that formed a mottled crust on the main street of Lukon. Old ice, proof of the long freeze. On either side the houses were stone-built and small, crouching back from the road and closed against the night. As he approached the main square he saw the first signs of activity. A crowd of men had gathered on the central, stone-flagged forum, where two priests of Redman stood by a dark, glistening heap. A white-haired man in a heavy robe was standing, head bowed, between them.

Carl's way to the Hostel was blocked, and he was curious to find out what was going on. He approached the edge of the crowd and moved beside a short, hooded figure who was a little to the rear of the rest of the group.

"What are they doing there?" he asked. "Has there been an accident?"

The cowled figure turned to him. It was a woman in her mid-twenties, with dark, straight hair cut low across her forehead. There was not enough light for him to make out the color of her eyes in the depths of her hood. She smiled at him bitterly.

"You must be even younger than you look. Haven't you ever seen a burning before?"

He looked at the priests and the frail figure between them. His face mirrored his confusion. "No, I've never heard of such a thing. You don't mean they are going to burn the old man?"

The woman put her head back and laughed, this time with genuine amusement. "We haven't come quite to that, yet, even here. It's a book burning—see the heap there, covered in kerosene? Those are books, forbidden texts that the Church of Redman has banned. The old man's 'crime' was keeping them in his library." Her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tone was scornful and reckless. "Listen to that crowd of mindless fools."

Carl only half-heard the jeers and taunts of the crowd as the priest placed a torch in the hand of the old man and led him forward, white head shaking, to ignite the soaked pile. He took the woman by the sleeve of her robe.

"What are these forbidden books about? Why are they forbidden?"

"Science. The forbidden sciences." The woman looked at Carl again, noted his intensity, and swiftly looked around her. "This is no place to talk about it, though. I've already said too much. This crowd will be full of Church observers, watching for people talking as we are." Her eyes took on a flickering, reddish-brown reflection as the flames in the square blazed higher. "Look, if you really want to talk more about this, meet me tomorrow at noon, in the Artisans' restaurant. No more talk now. Get out of here—it's not safe to be at a burning unless you are willing to mock men like Wilhelm the librarian there."

She turned quickly and pushed through the thin edge of the crowd. Carl looked after her, then turned again to the scene by the fire. The old man was being led away, tears running down his grimy face. The remaining priest turned to the crowd and seemed to be looking straight at Carl.

"Learn the lesson. Disregard the teachings of Redman at your own risk. There must be no breaking of the Divine Law, and you must cast from your minds and thoughts all ideas of the Old Religion or the forbidden sciences. Now, go to your homes."

The crowd began to disperse. Carl took a last look at the smoldering heap, then turned to continue up the hill to the Church Hostel. The priest watched him go, then whispered into the cowl of his robe as though in prayer.

"Worked exactly according to plan. I think I've won my bet, Jason. Denning shouldn't give us any trouble now—he's as easily impressed as the rest of these simpletons here. By the way, call up Headquarters and tell them we've got an unexpected prize from this burning. Pauli's 1921 review article on General Relativity—in mint condition.

"One other thing." His tone was casual. "The old librarian whose books we confiscated is having some kind of breakdown. We'll have to keep an eye on him for a few weeks. A nuisance, but it can't be helped."

The priest walked slowly to the Lukon Mission, his robe a little bulky. He arrived there just as Carl was settling into his hard bed at the Hostel, his mind busy with the events of the day. The Science Museum, with its endless arrays of exhibits—certain omissions there resonated in his mind, adding to other facts and inconsistencies that he had noticed in the past two years. Then the burning of the books, with the tantalizing references to the 'forbidden sciences', and the mysterious words of the dark-haired woman. They all spun furiously together in his head, until sleep at last removed them.

THE LONG-AWAITED THAW had begun during the night. Carl had gone to sleep to the soft rustle of powdery ice flakes against the window-pane. He awoke to a leaden grey sky and a harsh sleet. In a standard issue raincoat and plastic cape he walked gingerly down the hill on the slick, melting surface of the packed snow, past the long line of evergreens, white and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bowed down by their glittering burden of ice, until he came to the Artisans' restaurant.

Inside, he looked around at each table. The building was dimly-lit, with ornate examples of wood carving, stone work and metal castings—samples of the artisans' work—in every available nook and corner. He wandered about among the decorations, but although it was already noon there was no sign of the woman. He was turning to look in the street again when a hand took his elbow and a voice behind him said, "The table in the corner. Don't turn round, go to it."

She was wearing the same hooded robe. When she sat across the table from Carl, smiled at him and threw back the cowl, he could get a good look at her for the first time. Her black hair was cut short all round, and her eyes, shielded from view last night, were a clear, dark grey. Her nose was straight and a bit too big, giving her face a decisive, determined look.

"I waited to make sure you were alone." She held out her hand. "I'm Sarah Henderson."

Carl took her hand uncertainly. The school gave no training in the social graces. "I'm Carl Denning. I'm from Briarsford, south of here, and I'm just visiting Lukon for a few days."

She nodded. "I knew you were a stranger to the city. Do you have a food voucher? Let me have it for a minute."

She took out her own meal book, left her coat on the wooden bench and slipped away. A few minutes later she was back, carrying two large earthenware bowls of pea soup and a stack of sandwiches.

"Somebody's looking after you well. They gave you an unlimited food voucher. I took advantage of it to get us a bit more than the usual lunch here."

She was very easy to talk to. As they ate Carl found himself explaining how he came to be in Lukon, about his science training, about his feelings that there were some vital facts being withheld. He began to explain until she stopped him with a shake of her dark head.

"You're wasting your time, Carl. I don't know much about science. They decided years ago that I was best suited to be a language specialist, and that's been my job since then. I'm not teaching now, because they closed the schools until the weather improves. I teach language, and I specialize in poetry and literature."

"But you seemed to know all about the science books that were burned last night. That's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"I know about books, because a lot of my friends work in libraries. Wilhelm last night is one of them. He doesn't know anything about science, either, but he loves books, and he can't stand the idea of destroying any. I feel the same way."

"But so do I, Sarah. We use books about science all the time, and none of us would think of destroying them. Why do you do it here in Lukon?"

Sarah hesitated, biting her lower lip. "It's not just here, Carl," she said at last. "It's everywhere. You just haven't met it yet. You will. Books about science, from a certain period of time, are banned."

"Only about science?"

"That's all I know about. From about 1880 until the rise of the Church of Redman, in 2030, a lot of books were written that are on the forbidden list. They must be surrendered to the Church."

"What happened in 1880? All the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basic laws of science that we are taught were known then, anyway."

"I can't tell you that, Carl. You're the science expert." Her voice dropped. "I was given a copy of a book that's on the Forbidden Index, two years ago. I kept it because it's a rarity—very old, printed on woodpulp paper, and with text set by hand instead of computer. It was written a hundred and fifty years ago, but it's in good condition. Would you like to see it?"

Carl nodded and half-rose from his chair. Sarah held out a restraining hand. "Steady now—I don't have it here with me. It's at my house, a mile north of here. Finish your food and then we'll go. Try not to attract more attention—there are people in Lukon who disapprove of my opinions already. I don't want to add to that."

Outside, the sleet was turning to a relentless, hissing rain, driving down hard. The sky was so dark that evening seemed well-advanced, although it was still early afternoon. They trudged, heads down, through the slippery, empty streets. Carl thought again that Lukon was a town without colors, all washed-out greys and somber browns. The rain was so heavy that it seemed to get in everywhere. Their clothing could not keep it out and they were both soaked to the skin before they had walked half a mile. Carl felt an icy trickle working its way inside his collar and down his left shoulder. He shivered, and tried to pull his cape more tightly about him.

They reached Sarah's house with great relief, squelching up the sodden driveway, with its darkening cover of pitted snow, and Sarah unlocked the front door of the low, two-roomed stone house. She went across to the big fireplace and opened the dampers as far as they would go. Water dripped from her clothes, sizzling on the hearth and staining the big fur rug in front of the fire with dark spots.

"Here, we've got to get some dry things on, Carl," she said. "We'll begin to steam in a few minutes and I've had enough colds already this winter. I don't have anything long enough in the arms and legs for you, but I can at least get you a dry robe if you don't mind looking a bit strange."

She went into the bedroom, and rummaged in a big, carved chest there, while Carl squelched backwards and forwards in front of the fire, looking about him with interest. The house was built of heavy limestone, thick-walled and solid. The mixture of old, hand-made furniture with official Church equipment was strange to him, used to the strict modern style of the Briarsford school.

"Can't you see what worries me, Sarah?" he called through the open bedroom door. "Look, even here in your own house. Look at that." He pointed at her television set. "How does it work?"

"The on-off switch is on the left," said Sarah. "Volume is on the right."

"I don't mean that!" Carl was exasperated. "I mean, how *can* it work, with the science we are taught. Where do the signals come from, and how do they make a picture? Most people don't seem to care, but I want to understand *how*."

Sarah came back into the living-room. "Well, you're asking the wrong person." She had changed into a soft green woollen sweater and knee-length fawn skirt, her legs bare except for soft leather slippers. Carl looked at her pale knees and smooth, shapely calves, still holding the faint ghost of a summer tan, then turned his eyes away in confusion. She handed him a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great armful of assorted clothing.

"Here, go into the bedroom and try your luck with these. I don't have any shoes for you, but here's a pair of oversocks that should keep you warm enough." She threw more logs on the fire. "I don't know how to answer your questions. Have you looked in the library at the school for your answers?"

Carl's grunt of disgust sounded from the bedroom. "I've been through the whole library, and I've asked all the teachers. They're useless. Even on basic things. Look, even in your arts courses you must have covered evolution. How long did they tell you it took to go from mud to man?"

"I don't know. Billions of years, I think they said."

"All right. That means the sun must have been shining, more or less the way it is now, for all that time. Where does it get the energy? I've calculated how much heat it must give out in a year, and there's no way it could keep that up for a billion years with anything we've been taught. Burning won't do it, gravitational contraction won't do it, nothing can do it."

She was startled by the conviction in his voice. He came back into the living-room, a gawky stork-like figure in a robe ten sizes too small for him. Sarah suppressed a smile.

"Mechanics and physics sound all right, Sarah," he went on, oblivious of his appearance. "A perfect logical structure—until you take a close look, and try and synthesize. Look at electricity. We have it, but where does it come from?"

She hesitated. "From the dam and turbines at the head of the valley, doesn't it? The water turns the wheels and the wheels drive the generators."

"That's what we're told. But if my estimates are right, all those generators produce less than a hundredth of what we use. Where do we get the rest of it? There must be a tremendous energy-producing plant near here, but you never hear a word about it."

"Don't harangue me. It's not my doing, Carl. Anyway, does it matter? The important thing is that we have the energy we need."

"No, it's not. I thought you would understand. We are given simple, pat pictures of the world. They may be enough for somebody who has trouble mastering the multiplication tables, but they aren't the full story."

She nodded thoughtfully. "I can't say I really understand you, but I do believe you." She walked about the living-room, setting their wet clothes out to dry. "If you think there may be answers in the forbidden books, I'll get mine for you. I keep it hidden in the attic."

The book she produced was well-preserved and entitled simply 'The Feynman Lectures on Physics'. The language was archaic, more wordy yet less formal than the modern axiomatic instruction texts. Carl settled down in front of the window, with Sarah reading over his shoulder. After ten minutes or so she left him and began to prepare a meal. He was gone, off in a rapt concentration of his own. 'Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end,' thought Sarah, and smiled to herself as she prepared meat, herbs and vegetables and set them on the stove.

The smell of cooking finally got through to Carl where words could not. He had sat like a statue for four hours, moving only to turn pages. Sarah moved quietly about the house, cleaning and cooking, and from time to time stopping to read a page over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his shoulder. At last he lifted his head, sniffed, stretched, and shivered all over like an animal. He looked about him as though he had just entered the room. Sarah came to his side and felt his hand.

"I thought so. You're frozen. You should have moved about, instead of sitting all that time in one position. Come on, move over here and let's get some hot food into you."

They moved closer to the fire. Sarah dimmed the light and put barley bread, beer, plates and a big beef casserole onto a low table between them. She watched in silence through Carl's first two helpings, then looked at him and raised her eyebrows.

"Well, are you going to tell me what you've been doing? Or is it too hard for a simpleton like me to understand?"

Carl was startled, then apologetic. "Sorry. I was still thinking about what I've been reading. I've just been skimming, but it's clear that there's a whole world that's not taught—avoided—in our schools."

"Missing subjects, you mean?"

"More basic than that. For instance, we learn that atoms are indivisible. Now I find from this book that there is a whole world of structure inside an atom. The things we use every day—computers, televisions, things like that—depend on this 'sub-atom' world, and can't function without it. So *somebody* must know about and use the knowledge. I'm wondering what else there is that isn't taught. This book was written around 1960. What else happened between then, and the founding of Redmanism? That was seventy years later."

He pushed away his plate and sat dejected, hands loosely hanging between his knees. "So much for the things I thought I knew. Now, I don't know if anything I've learned is true." His tone was bitter. "I just don't know what to do next. I can't go back to Briarsford, to be fed on bits and pieces, not knowing what's true and what's nonsense. Poor old Nielsen, with his 'great absolute truths'. I'm sure he believes it. He's a stooge, and he has no idea of it. I can't live like that."

Sarah sat silent, sympathetic. At last she went again to the stove, made two mugs of spiced tea, and handed one to Carl. "If you'll take my advice, you'll sleep on it before you decide anything. A big shock never looks the same the next day."

She placed her mug on the hearth in front of her, then settled herself with her back against Carl's chair, hugging her knees and looking at the flickering flames before her. Her voice was soft. "I remember when my uncle gave me a copy of Shakespeare's sonnets. I'd never seen them before. I read myself into a stupor that night, and I thought the world could never be the same again. It never has been the same, quite, but next morning"—she shrugged, ruefully—"there it was, pretty much back to normal. Same old world."

She went on chatting casually about her past, drawing Carl bit by bit into the conversation. Little by little, the food, warmth, firelight and her calm manner unknotted him. He moved from his chair and they sat side by side on the tawny rug, watching the changing red tableau of the fire. Their conversation slowly died with the ebbing flames.

Afterward, they would never agree as to who made the first advance. Carl claimed that it must have been Sarah, citing his lack of experience as his proof. She always denied it, ve-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hemently. There was one minor awkwardness with clothing, that Sarah turned to a joke as Carl fumbled with and at last broke a fastening. Then a second tense moment, when Carl saw the crucifix on its thin silver chain, pendant between her firelit breasts.

"Sarah! You follow the Old Religion!"

"Yes. Does it matter?" She placed her hand softly on him.

Not then. Nothing mattered then. The world would never be quite the same again for Carl Denning.

Much later, Sarah rose quietly from the fireside. She brought two heavy blankets, placed one over Carl's sleeping body and wrapped the second one around her. She went to the window and looked out at the night.

The rain had continued, strengthened. It poured down now in a dark, vertical torrent, dissolving away the hard-packed snow. The night outside was full of the sound of a thousand small streams and rivulets, carrying off the surface water.

Other images formed in Sarah's mind, and she sighed. *Still falls the rain. Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails upon the Cross. But now, of course, it's twenty-one hundred nails. It's still falling, and we seem to have learned nothing. Look at my vows—honor, and faith, and a sure intent—and here I am, playing at Earth-mother. The firelight makes him look so young. What will he think when he sees me in full sunlight? A rag, and a bone, and a hank of hair? That's what I should save my sadness for, instead of brooding here over the weather. Driving rain and falling tears—maidens, of your charity, pity my most luckless state. Oh well, omne animal post coitum triste est—except, I bet, a teenage boy. He'll wake up hungry.*

Sarah stood up, picked two cushions from the window seat, went to the fireplace, placed one cushion beneath Carl's head, lay down beside him and pulled the blanket over them.

"THE BASIC IDEAS that underlie a civilization are not propagated instantly from their creators to the population as a whole. The process takes time. It was more than a hundred years after Newton's great statements of natural laws when the common man realized that the Universe should be capable of rational explanation, of comprehensible mathematical analysis. The secrets of the stars in their courses could be understood. When that realization dawned, the Age of Reason was born. The population as a whole, without of course explicitly knowing why, became convinced that final truths were knowable; and full explanations of the world were possible.

"In the same way, the modern great revolutions in human perception of the Universe have slowly percolated through to the masses. Mankind's fundamental thinking has finally reflected these changes, while not fully understanding them. We will be most concerned to trace the effects of the scientific revolutions that began at the end of the nineteenth century . . . "—from 'Fundamental Attitudes in Human Society, 1625 to 2025', by Jahangir Redman.

"FOLLOW THE RIVER SOUTH, about twenty miles from here. Then take the road west, where the quarry begins." Sarah traced the route with her finger along the wrinkled map. "Keep on that until you cross the Scar, then head north again, following the Scar.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now then. If you believe the rumors that float around Lukon, about forty miles north of there you will find a 'Processing Center'. That's the only place I've ever heard of where the Church had definite rules that restrict access—and that's mainly rumors, as far as I'm concerned."

"But that's less than thirty miles from here," said Carl, dark head intent over the map. "Why not head straight for it?"

"That would take you over the mountains, through the Lukon Pass. It would be an impossible journey at this time of year—and it's patrolled for most of the year. Wild animals, too, in the winter. I've heard there are bears, and some people say there are big wild-cats up there."

They were sitting, heads close together, at the table. A small stack of Sarah's most treasured books were at Carl's left hand. He had read some of the poems in them but was not very impressed.

"There are no rules, Sarah. Nothing that tells you what you can write, and what you can't write. Science is different. It has laws, principles, theorems."

"That's part of the attraction of poetry—you can go just where your imagination takes you. It's not bounded and confined, the way that science always seems to be. Anyway, poetry has its own rules."

"I haven't seen any. Where are they written down?"

"They're not. But they exist. Like the sonnets you read earlier. A sonnet *must* have fourteen lines of a certain length. If it hasn't, it can still be a poem—but it isn't a sonnet. Writing according to those rules, in a certain form, is part of the pleasure. Look at this." She picked up one of the books. "It goes even further. The poet has written an acrostic sonnet—see, the first letter of each line, read downwards, spells out the name of his mistress. That's a hard thing to do, and still produce a poem that's poetry."

Carl acted unimpressed—but he put the book in his pocket after Sarah had closed it. "Seems to me the best part of the trick is picking a girl-friend with fourteen letters in her name. In science, now . . . "

The Scar was not shown on the map. "It's a barren place," said Sarah. "Where the plants don't grow quite right. It's been that way for a long time, since before I was born. One winter, the power failed for three weeks. There was no electricity, and people nearly froze to death. Next spring, the Scar was there."

Carl looked sceptical. "I can't see how electricity could affect the plants. I'd like to see it, but the way you describe things, the only way to get a look at the Processing Center would be to go over the Lukon Pass, in winter. If it's patrolled when the weather is good, and the southern route is patrolled all the time, I don't see how else to do it."

"You can't do it. It's not possible. Carl, forget what I've been saying—it's only rumors." She was disturbed by the look in his eye.

"I can't forget. I'm not going back to Briarsford until I know what's going on. If the answers are at the Processing Center, that's where I want to go. I won't be able to settle down to anything until I get some answers that make sense to me."

"Not even for . . . ." Sarah stopped. She looked again at Carl, leaned back and put her hands to her eyes. As though to herself, she whispered, "If this be error and upon me proved . . ." Then she placed her hands firmly face-down on the table and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked at him again. She sighed. "Give me your meal voucher. Good thing it's unlimited. We'll need at least a week's food. And we'll need back-packs. There's only one tent—it will have to do for two." She smiled. "Sorry, Carl. It's really a small tent. You'll learn the less spiritual side of the female in the next few days."

Carl hugged her, hard. "For that, Sarah, I'll read a hundred more poems if you want me to. Where did you put my outdoor clothes?"

The northern track leading to the Lukon Pass was deserted. Thaw and rain were over, and the sky hinted at more bad weather to come.

"YOU JUST LOST your bet. He wasn't on the hovercraft yesterday, and he hasn't slept at the Hostel since the first night in Lukon. Why didn't they report to us?"

"The Hostel? Why should they? We didn't give them any special instructions. Did you check Denning's food voucher, to see if he's been using it?"

"And how. He half-emptied a couple of stores—enough food for a couple of weeks. My fault. I didn't have the sense to make it a limited voucher. He could be halfway to Kelso before he needs more food."

"I'll get a tracer on him, Jason. The patrols should get him easily enough, he can't have gone far in two days. You stay there in Lukon. See if you can find where he spent that second night."

"Get an aerial survey, visible and thermal infra-red, if you can, Luis. Cover all the roads between here and Briarsford. I'll call again tonight."

It did not occur to them to look north and west. One man, without extra warm clothing and a protective tent, would already have frozen in the mountains. Anyway, there was no way that Carl Denning could have heard about the Processing Center north-west of Lukon. It was an annoyance to have to speed up the recruiting program for a promising prospective scientist, but it had happened before. The search procedures began.

NINE MILES along the track to the Lukon Pass, Carl and Sarah came to the ghost town. The old buildings and deserted streets were wild and crumbling, full of gorse and heather. Sarah refused to sleep inside any of the old houses.

"I know it would be safer, Carl. But it's the thought of all the people who lived and died there, back when this was a thriving town. I don't want to sleep with their spirits."

"That's nonsense, Sarah. When people die, that's the end of it. There are no spirits. If we sleep outside, we'll be colder, we'll have to put the tent up, we'll not be sheltered from the wind—and what about those wild animals you told me about?"

Sarah shivered. All the same, they slept outside. It was not too uncomfortable. The hollow ribs of the tent supports were inflated using a small cylinder of gas, to produce a firm, triangular prism within a few seconds. Carl looked doubtfully at the thin shiny walls.

"We'll freeze in this. It's like gossamer."

Sarah shook her head. "We'll be all right. It's made of passivine. It reflects heat, and it won't conduct it."

Carl examined it closely. Another thing his science classes couldn't explain. They crawled inside, and he was amazed to find it warm and snug. Physical closeness, forced on them by the size of the tent, was a delight.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carl's education in the ways of the world continued to grow. But outside, the temperature had dropped again and the first flakes of new snow were beginning to fall.

Before they at last went to sleep, still entwined, Carl had a last, drowsy thought. "What happened to all the people who used to live here, Sarah? Where did they go?"

She came back from the edge of slumber. "We shrank, Carl. Once, before Redman's time, there were six billion people in the world. Then in the Dark Ages, the number went down to one billion, until Redmanism produced stability. It's steady now, with two billion of us, but there are lots of towns like this. To me, they talk their own language, of old weddings and long-dead dreams."

Carl was too tired to ask her what she meant, and by morning they had other things on their minds. Dawn was a continuous, formless white, with sky and earth merging into one at the horizon. Eight inches of new snow had fallen and everywhere there was a silent, virgin cover, unmarked by wind or any sign of bird and animal tracks. Travel was impossible. They moved into a well-preserved stone house—Sarah somehow swallowed her fears of its former tenants—and they settled in to await a change in the weather.

It came after four days, with high winds in the night screaming through the battered roof and blowing the powdery snow into great drifts, sweeping the highlands bare. The next morning, unsure of the decision, they set out again to the north.

By evening they were in the saddle of the Lukon Pass, tired, hungry, cold and depressed. Their movements had become slow and wooden, full of a deadly weariness. The trip seemed impossible. All day long they had toiled upward, seeing no signs of life except a few moorland birds in their drab winter plumage, flying and calling aimlessly above them, and one winter hare, limping across a rocky ridge a few hundred feet in front of them. Fatigue, bone-aching clear cold, drifts of snow and the relentless, iron-gray rocks had drained them. Their minds had become numbed, their bodies uncontrolled. Carl's natural curiosity and Sarah's enthusiasm for natural beauty had gone. They pitched the tent early and crawled into it as dusk approached.

Inside the warm cocoon they lay close and silent, grateful for food, rest, and companionship. By the middle of the evening, they could talk again, could continue their old, ongoing argument. Sarah was on the defensive.

"It doesn't pretend to offer certainty of happiness on earth. But it tells me there is something in the universe that is higher than I am, more than present pleasure. The Church of Redman offers nothing beyond itself. It's just a set of rules and rituals to make people feel happy and secure, but there's no soul in it."

"But most people *are* happy, Sarah. Isn't that important?"

"Of course. I know I'm the odd one out. But you are the same, in a way."

"About science? That's true. Everyone I know—including you—seems to be perfectly content with superficial explanations. Cookbook rules that allow a man to repair a television set or a grav-motor are sufficient. No one cares about basic reasons, as long as they know enough to plug one bit into another."

"—and I'm telling you that my view of the Church of Redman is like your view of the repairmen. Just a set of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instructions, so you don't have to think about life—follow them, and you'll be all right."

"It's not the same at all, Sarah. The Church offers more . . . "

The argument went on, hot and endless. But little by little, the bridges were growing between them. When at last they went to sleep, entwined again like two silkworns in their passive cocoon, Carl realized that he had never before been close to another person in his whole life. All his memories were of the schools. With a sudden insight impossible for him a week earlier, he restrained himself from asking too much about Sarah's past.

"GOT HIM. At last. An aerial patrol spotted two people in the Lukon Pass this afternoon. Who'd have thought anyone would go up there at this time of year? It fits with yesterday's report about the missing school-teacher. She's the reason for Denning's break-out. She's supposed to be a supporter of the Old Religion."

"I've told you before, Jason, we're getting too soft with them. They need discipline. Want me to have Denning picked up?"

"We might as well let the fence do it, and save ourselves an argument. Ask Power Central to take extra care with the antenna attitude at Satellite Control. We don't want the pick-up team or Denning to get landed with a big dose of microwaves."

"What about the damned woman? We can't take her to the Processing Center."

"Don't worry about her, Luis. We'll give her a fright and send her back to Lukon. If she spreads the word that we took Denning, so much the better. We've got to stop our programs' being interfered with by a small group of ignorant non-scientists. They are too important for that. I'll handle Sarah Henderson."

THE PASS was finally opening out before them into the north-western valley. Standing at a high point, Carl could see a flat, metallic area far to the north. Sweeping south from it ran a broad, dark-green band where the vegetation looked subtly different. It extended to the southern horizon. The Scar. A scattered group of dark-grey buildings stood on the perimeter of the bright, metallic area. Sarah pointed at them.

"They fit the description. The Processing Center. I don't know what the bright area is."

"I'd like to look at that, too. Let's keep as far south as we can and work in closer to the buildings. That way we can take a look at the Scar at the same time."

Two miles further on they came to the first fence and the warning notice. 'DO NOT PROCEED WITHOUT OFFICIAL PASS.' Underneath, in smaller letters, 'Mean microwave intensity 1.0 milliwatts per square centimeter. Check the meters.'

They climbed the fence cautiously and went on, across a long, cleared belt and to a second fence and warning notice.

'NO PERSONNEL BEYOND THIS POINT DURING SATELLITE MAINTENANCE PERIODS. IF SIREN SOUNDS, PROCEED AT ONCE TO OUTER PERIMETER. Mean microwave intensity 40.0 milliwatts per square centimeter. Authorized repair staff only.'

Carl motioned to Sarah to let him go on ahead, and swung a leg over the fence. As he did so, he felt the vibration beginning in the metal. He turned to warn her. "No closer, Sarah. I think there may be a current

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through this."

He stopped. She seemed to be receding and advancing, mouth wide open but making no sound. Carl began to climb back over the fence, but the metal was dissolving in his hands. He looked down at them and fell through the fence and onwards, into and through the ground. As he fell, the air was sucked from his lungs. He tried to turn his head again to look at Sarah, but there was only blackness there; darkness, breathlessness, and a rushing sound that went on and on and on.

When the noise finally stopped, light returned and at once he could breathe again. He turned again to look for Sarah, and froze. The fence had vanished and he was sitting by a big window, looking out over an endless array of grey metal wedges. They went on as far as the eye could see, shining and regular. Bewildered, he turned back and found that he was inside a long, carpeted room. Watching him in silence was a fair-haired man wearing the insignia of the Church of Redman.

After a long pause the man nodded his head to Carl. "Take your time," he said. "Narcogas takes a while. Let me know when you feel up to talking."

Nausea and confusion were competing for Carl's attention. He swallowed bile, straightened in the chair, and narrowed his eyes against the bright inside lights.

"I'm all right," he said after a while. "What happened to Sarah?"

"Don't worry about her. She's fine, and we're looking after her. She'll be on her way back to Lukon in a few hours. The gas protection hit her a lot less hard. You know, you shouldn't have left Lukon without telling anybody."

Carl looked at the metal array outside the window, correlating it with the flat area they had seen from the Lukon Pass. "This is the Processing Center, right? That's where we were trying to get to."

The other man smiled. "Then you succeeded." There was something enormously self-assured in his manner—the impression of a man in complete control of the world. "I expect you have a lot of questions to ask us. Our recruits usually do."

It was all too rational, too open. Carl had been prepared for many things, but not for cheerful confidence and a friendly reception. "What do you mean, recruits? What do you do here? And are you part of the Church, the people who control science teaching?"

"One at a time. You are a recruit. I think you'll like it. It means that you'll be living now among people who can think the same way you can." He smiled. "No more Mr. Nielsen. No more 'great absolute truths'. We aren't part of the Church—the Church is part of us."

"Then what are you?"

"Scientists. Guardians, if you want to call us that. Redman himself was a scientist, you know. He did his basic work on human development by applying science to sociology."

"And this is a school for scientists?"

"Not really. More of a transfer point, but it has many functions. Think of it as our Headquarters for this part of the world. The reason we set it out here is because of that." He pointed to the great array of wedges outside the window. "This is the main receiving and control center for one node of the solar satellite power system. We don't like the receivers too near the cities."

"What do you mean, receivers?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What do you receive?"

"Power. Most of the power we use in this area is generated by a big array of photovoltaic cells, hung twenty-two thousand miles up. In space. You've done mechanics, right? That's the distance where an orbiting body rotates at the same rate as the earth, so it can hang always above one point of the surface. You'll see it for yourself, in a few weeks."

In spite of his confusion and worry, Carl was fascinated. "But how can you get power that's generated up there down to earth?"

"It's beamed down as microwave radiation—long wavelength radiation. You know how to solve Maxwell's equations, right? So you know how to compute the energy carried by electromagnetic radiation. It gets received at the antenna there. The array is five kilometers across, and we don't like anyone to get much closer than ten kilometers. Microwave radiation has bad long-term systemic effects on tissue, even at quite low dose rates."

"So power from here runs things back in Briarsford and Lukon?"

"That's right." The fair-haired man looked at Carl shrewdly. "You already knew that the conventional explanations of the electrical power supply wouldn't work, did you? That's a good sign for your future."

"How do you know so much about me—what I know, what I've been taught?"

"We ought to. We've been watching you since you were ten years old. Now, you're ready to start the training that will make you part of the next generation of real scientists—after you've had a few years of instruction at the Lunar Base and in the Libration Point colonies. We've watched you closely. You couldn't really disappear from the system when you ran away from Lukon."

"I didn't run anywhere except here—I just wanted to get some answers." He was thoughtful for a moment. "Was Sarah Henderson part of the plan to trap me here?"

"Don't say you were trapped. You'd have been coming here anyway, at the end of the year."

"But was Sarah part of the arrangement you made?"

"Not at all. We got the shock of our lives when we found you were heading over the Lukon Pass—you were lucky to make it. I'd never heard of Sarah Henderson until a few days ago. She's just a teacher in Lukon, nothing to do with us. You can forget about her—I doubt if she knows even the elements of science."

Carl persisted. "But you are sure she is all right?"

The priest-scientist showed his first sign of impatience. "Of course she is. I told you, we have a responsibility to serve as guardians. We take that very seriously. Sarah Henderson will be returned, safe and well, to her home in Lukon. We'll keep an eye on her for a while—we still don't know how she learned about the existence of the Center here."

As he was speaking, a siren outside began to wail. He looked at his wrist unit and snapped his fingers in annoyance. "I might have known that would happen. They always pick the most inconvenient times for the drills." He shrugged. "I have to go to it. It's top-priority. Thirty years ago, they lost attitude control and the beam swung wild for three weeks. You've seen the result. The center of the beam made the Scar. It fried the ground with microwave radiation. We're still estimating the long-term effects on the ecology."

He stood up, walked over to Carl

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and handed him a bound report. "Here, take a look at this while I'm away. The control drill will take an hour, maybe two. You'll find in here a few more answers to your questions. See you later."

There was a further moment of concern for Sarah, a momentary sense of loss. Then Carl opened the report and excitement and anticipation blotted out other emotions.

"A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, mankind was in trouble," it began. "The population explosion, anticipated a century earlier as the main problem facing man had disappeared. Instead, the population was dwindling rapidly. Waves of suicide, indifference, madness and despair swept the human race, and the trends were all downward.

"There was no shortage of supposed explanations, but solutions were lacking until Jahangir Redman, in 2010, began his study of the correlation between fundamental beliefs and human behavior. He found a series of correlation coefficients, that could propagate scientific and religious doctrines forward in time and allow a quantitative effect on behavior patterns to be calculated.

"The projections were grim indeed. The course seemed irreversible, down to oblivion and the collapse of society. A philosopher might have stopped at that point; but Jahangir Redman was an activist. . . ."

Carl read on. Twenty-two thousand miles above his head, the great array of solar panels trimmed its angles like a giant sail, to face the full sun. The microwave transmission antenna in the satellite made a series of minute changes in pointing attitude as it responded to the control signals sent up from Power Central. The flow of power continued.

THE WORST of the winter was over in Lukon. Spring flowers were braving the March winds, and Sarah had picked a bunch of wild daffodils on her way home from the school, east of the town, where she was teaching. They would brighten the house, and that was badly needed. The months since Carl had been swept away by the Church of Redman had been grim indeed, but at last she was coming through. She walked up the drive, unlocked her front door, went through it—and dropped books and flowers. Carl was sitting in a chair by the fireplace, thin and pale as ever, older in the eyes and the set of his mouth.

The beginning was the physical joy of reunion. Carl was intense and passionate but Sarah could sense the core of sadness and reserve.

"Carl, what did they do to you?" She was holding him tightly by the shoulders, studying his face. "Did they hurt you? I asked about you when I got back, everywhere I thought there might be information. No one had ever seen you or heard of you, ever admitted your existence."

"I know, Sarah. The old Carl Denning doesn't exist. Officially I'm not here today, and I'll have to leave early tomorrow morning. I had to make an excuse to get back here for even one day. I didn't want you to think I was in any trouble, and I didn't want you grieving for me."

"It's two months too late for that wish, Carl. I thought you were dead. Where have you been?"

"Many places. Come and sit by me, Sarah."

They settled together by the fire, in the same position as on their first evening. Carl stared deep into the fire, looking for words there.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm going to break the rules," he began at last. "I'm going to tell you what the Church of Redman does, so you'll believe me when I say that one day I will come back. Not for two years, at least, but I'll be back. Sarah, do you think people you know are happy? Not always, but mostly?"

She gave the question real thought before she answered. "I think they are. You and I may be the exceptions, but most people are content."

He nodded. "That's what I've been hearing. Happiness, *for the majority*, is the goal of civilization. Worry and grief for a minority are a necessary consequence. That's what Redmanism is all about. You'll have to take a lot of this on faith, because you can't check it, but the key is in the forbidden sciences."

"You found out all about them at the Processing Center?"

"Enough. It all goes back a long way. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, people believed that the world was really knowable—not simple, but at least capable of being fully understood. All science seemed to be completely definite. So people came to think of things that way, and it looked as though science offered certainty. That was the view of the average man, though he never got around to expressing it."

He smiled ruefully, still looking deep into the fire. "That's the way things used to seem to me when I was in school in Briarsford. I didn't know when I was well off."

Sarah was holding his hands in hers, and looking both happy and perplexed. "Are you saying science isn't definite, Carl? We always learned it that way."

"Oh, it's definite in its own way. You see, at the end of the nineteenth century some mysterious things were discovered. Radioactivity—atoms breaking up of their own accord, into smaller particles—was discovered, and there seemed to be no way to tell which atom would be the one to disintegrate. It seemed to happen at random. Then early in the twentieth century things got worse. The basic description of the world was through something called quantum theory, and that was all based on *probabilities*, not certainties. The uncertainty principle showed that the probabilities were fundamental, and couldn't be removed from the theory. Finally, a few years later a mathematician called Godel knocked the final nail in. He proved that whole classes of theorems in mathematics are neither provable, nor disprovable—they are *undecidable*."

He looked at Sarah, who appeared dubious and sceptical. "Do you understand me, Sarah?"

"I understand what you're saying, Carl. I just don't see what it has to do with Redmanism. It doesn't sound like a disaster if things seemed less definite."

"That's what people thought, before Redman. But it takes a long time for ideas that are very abstract to get down to the average man. Maybe three or four generations. By the time they did, the precise way the uncertainty is involved had been lost: People had come to think that nothing was knowable and nothing was really provable. So by the end of the twentieth century, everything was doubted. Not only that, civilization seemed to be coming apart at the seams. Redman proved—mathematically—that it was all cause and effect. He realized that the only solution was to *re-introduce certainty* into the average man's view of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world. And he set out to do just that."

"Are you saying that the Church of Redman isn't really a church at all?" interrupted Sarah. "I can't believe that. It's the strongest religion in the world, and it's driven the other religions underground."

"It's organized as a religion, Sarah. Redman did it that way to get action on his ideas. He decided that the only way he could operate, without getting involved in revolution or politics, was through a religion. It could spread openly or secretly, across language and geographic barriers."

"And the Priests of Redman—they are really scientists, controlling which science should be taught?"

"That's right. Books dealing with uncertainty and undecidability are banned, and you can only find them inside the Church itself. That's where the real science is done."

"And who controls the scientists themselves?"

Carl was puzzled by the question. "The scientists are the guardians of everyone, Sarah. What other guardians are needed?"

She was shaking her head vehemently. "Carl, I know what you're saying. But there's an old saying that the Church of Redman may have forgotten: power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. Are you going to become one of the scientists, yourself?"

"As soon as I've been trained."

"Then you're going to become part of a bad system. Maybe Redman meant well when he set up the Church, but you can never create a good society based on deception. It's been tried before, and it always fails. The trouble is, people won't learn from history. Suppose Redman was just plain *wrong*. God knows, people have been wrong often enough in the past. Suppose the Dark Ages were some sort of natural event, a natural way of controlling the population?"

Carl shook his head wearily. The reunion with Sarah was so different from what he had hoped. "I've seen Redman's analysis. Too many others have checked it for it to be wrong."

"Even so, didn't you tell me that science doesn't accept the idea of absolute theories—that any theory is in time replaced by a more general one? Maybe there could be other cures."

"It would be a terrible risk, Sarah. You would endanger the whole world."

"Perhaps. Maybe we have to risk a wound and a scar or two sometimes. One thing worries me more than anything. The people who should be looking for other answers are the ones who know Redmanism the best—the scientists. Do you honestly believe they are doing that? They are an elite now, the chosen few. The rest of us are outside the club. Would they want to change to a system where science might not be the top of the line?"

Carl was silent, uncomfortable. Sarah's last words had scored a hit. The feeling of absolute self-confidence that Carl had sensed from the scientists of Redman could be seen, all too easily, as arrogance. The work was fascinating, but the people lacked something he could feel in Sarah.

She easily read his discomfort, and reached to pull his head close to hers. "You are going to be taken by science, Carl. I can see it in your eyes when you speak about it. Science is your true mistress, your only lasting beloved. But I hope you won't forget me, or the rest of us here. When 'first love's impassioned blindness' has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

faded, look for another answer. Make sure the Priests of Redman share the hardships, and don't have an easier life than the rest of us—otherwise, there will be no search for a different solution."

She put her hand over his mouth before he could reply. "No, love, no debate. If I've got you for just one night, that's short enough without losing any more time."

WHEN SHE AWOKE the next morning he had already gone, slipping quietly away before dawn. On the table where they had shared their first evening meal she found a book, one that Carl had slipped into his pocket before they had started out for their trek over the Lukon Pass. She opened it and read the note tucked inside.

"Dearest Sarah. Thanks for the loan of your book. After you fell asleep last night I did a lot of thinking, and I'm beginning to see what you are saying about the Church of Redman. You probably realize that you have shown me another side of the world—the side you see and live in, different from the scientists' life. I don't know if I could ever live fully in your world, or in mine. But we can try.

"Did you know that from early childhood I've dreamed of being an astronomer, working with the remote worlds of space? A year ago, that was my whole ambition. It is still my strongest wish, but now I know it is not everything. You brought me to Earth, and I am both glad and sorry to be here.

"I want to say that in another way. The past two months have been busy. I've taken a trip off Earth, around the Moon, up to the big space stations. I can't describe the feeling, hanging there where the sun shines all the time, looking back at Earth and knowing that somewhere on that little ball there was night, Lukon, this house and you.

"Here is one result of the time I did have. Don't judge it too harshly.

Sirius, ice-bound furnace of the winter sky,
Andromeda, remotely giant, spun of silver mist,
Rich realms of light to lure the mind and eye
Away from Earth, to wander. In the abyss
Has intellect, too often, been betrayed
Hiding reflection in reflection's field,
Each glow-worm light a loftier shrine than shade.
No price too high for one clear mote revealed.
Dare I in that retreat scorn Cupid's hold,
Expect his power one world alone to govern?
Rash fool. After the dart, in vain I would
Still blind unknowing, tell the stars of Heaven.
Out of eternal light I hurtle sick to Earth,
New-falling Satan, tasting life and death.'

Sarah read the sonnet, then ran her finger slowly down the first letters, picking out her name. *Sarah Henderson. Carl was right. It would never have worked out as Sarah Denning. But he understands, that's the important thing. It's the first crack in the wall, the beginning of a new look at the Church. Two years. What will he have become in two years, what will I be when he returns? He has come more than half-way to my world in two short months. Can I go the other*

(cont. on page 39)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.COM
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now—enjoy a life of unbelievable riches, lasting love and constant protection with the secrets in this startling WITCH BOOK—

THE MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT

Whatever it is you need or want, Witchcraft can get it for you quickly, easily, and automatically, say these experts. You'll discover how it can bring abundant and overflowing wealth, find or bring back a lover, ward off evil influences, and much more—step-by-step in plain English, with complete easy-to-follow instructions!

Yes . . . Witchcraft! Every time you hear the word it brings with it the feelings of deep occult secrets—secrets that you would like to know so that your life can be better; so that your enemies will stop bothering you; so that serenity, love, power and comfort can be yours!

THE MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT lays bare these secrets for the first time! Do you want a bank account bursting at the seams with money? A love life that would make a sultan envious? Supreme power to crush your enemies and reward your friends? What would it be worth to you to utter a simple incantation that would cause any pain to vanish? Or say another, and immediately recover some lost object?

What would it be worth to you to fly through time and space, on astral wings, as Witches do . . . go wherever you wish . . . do whatever you wish . . . without being detected . . . watch the antics of others behind closed doors . . . hear private conversations . . . make time run forward or backward . . . read tomorrow's newspaper in a "black mirror" . . . find out what really happened in history . . . make your face old or young at will!

BRINGS AUTOMATIC ASSURED SUCCESS!

Witchcraft can bring your heart's desire! You can use it to heal someone, influence the boss to give you that raise, or make someone stop bothering you! It's easy! The easiest thing in the world! You don't have to be wealthy or super-intelligent to get started! Thousands of ordinary people all over the world are using Witchcraft Power right now!

Witches have known for centuries that people are scared of them and their powers! And rightly so! NOW YOU CAN SHARE THE

IN THIS WITCH BOOK YOU'LL DISCOVER . . .

- How to Cast Spells that Really Work!
- Your Magic Window on the World!
- Personal Protection!
- Telepathy Made Easy!
- Influencing Others to Do Your Bidding!
- Controlling a Conversation!
- The Technique of Silent Persuasion!
- Using Witchcraft to Find Friends!
- How to Find the Lover You Want!
- How to Bring Your Perfect Mate to You!
- How to Dominate Others!
- Witchcraft Power for Money!
- Withcraft Power to Make You Irresistible to Others!
- Spells for Finding Lost Objects!
- How to Always Win with Luck Spells!
- More Power for Bigger Goals!
- Inhaling Cosmic Energy!
- Recharging Your Cosmic Batteries!
- Raising Your Vital Energy Level!
- How to Keep Evil Forces Away!

seat FREE . . . how to vacation at the finest hotels, motels, pools and pleasure palaces, start living like a millionaire as Witches do!

AMAZING TECHNIQUE HAS HELPED THOUSANDS!

Witchcraft secrets like these can make you rich faster than anything else in the world! Here's how others have used them to make

MEET THE AUTHORS

GAVIN FROST, B.Sc., Ph.D., D.D., is Archbishop of the Church of Wicca, with national headquarters in Salem, Missouri; branches in several states and worldwide membership. He is Marshal of the Gold Star of England, with the right to wear the Saffron Robe and one of the very few Witches in the Western Hemisphere privileged to wear the authentic mark of initiation on his wrist. Although descended from a long line of mystics and scholars, and formerly a Vice-President and Director of International Operations for major aerospace companies, he prefers to be thought of as a humble teacher.

Mrs. YVONNE FROST, A.A., D.D., with her husband Gavin Frost, devotes her time to giving private instruction and publishing *Survival,* the newsletter of the Church of Wicca, of which she is a Bishop.

Articles by or about Gavin and Yvonne Frost have appeared in such national publications as *Midnight* and the *National Enquirer.*

over other persons! Is someone bothering you? No problem at all, with Magic Witchcraft. For example, there is a spell called the "Cross Not My Path" ritual, for people who are having neighbor trouble. When you use it, you know you will never again have trouble with this neighbor!

With these amazing Witchcraft secrets, other people will look up to you—in awe—you'll automatically dazzle others with your power to make things happen at your will, you'll be Master of your destiny, *and never have to apologize to anyone for anything!*

Whatever you want or need, whatever frustration is bothering you, Witchcraft will help you. It is not evil—nor is it Black Magic. Like electricity, it is simply a power given by nature for the use of men, to make life easier.

You'll see how to get paid without working . . . how to get expensive clothes and furs FREE . . . how to get a first-class plane

Now! Let This Amazing Witch Book Bring You INFINITE WEALTH, FINE POSSESSIONS, A COMFORTABLE NEW HOME, FINANCIAL SECURITY, LOVE, CONTROL OVER OTHERS, And More—Easily And Automatically!

For centuries, these Witchcraft secrets were hushed up, so that those in power could stay in power! Feudal lords kept their bondsmen as slaves. Factory owners kept their employees in dreaded sweatshops, because these masters knew *they must not allow their workers to realize that they need* not labor their lives away. Witchcraft was suppressed because it works! Not because of any "evil" in it. If it hadn't worked, no one would have worried about it. If you want to gain power, all you need is this amazing Witch Book!

By using these Witchcraft secrets, you too can change your life and gain health, wealth, someone to love—or anything else—surely, swiftly and automatically!

• **THE WITCH'S MONEY JAR!**—You'll discover the secret of the Witch's Money Jar, a mysterious jar that fills with money—whenever you want or need it! All you need is some water, pennies, and an ordinary jar or bowl! You'll be amazed at the speed with which it fills with money—a seem*ingly endless supply of needed cash!*

• **THE WITCH'S MONEY MAGNET!**—You'll see how to magnetize a dollar bill so that it multiples! All you need to make your own Witch's Money Magnet is a dollar bill, a green candle, and the words on page 38. Once you do this, your dollar will double and keep doubling! You'll enjoy glittering luxuries, and start living like a millionaire, as Witches do!

• **THE WITCH'S BLACK MIRROR!**—Just as your TV set has been called your "window on the world," so the Black Mirror is your "window on the psychic world"—the world of the unknown. Making your own personal Black Mirror takes only a few moments and can open the way to *unguessable visions. All you need is a bowl of water, some* ink, and the chant on page 23. Suddenly you will see scenes from other places and times, or any scene you wish to see!

You'll see how Vern, a man who likes to give a lot of expensive parties, was always short of cash until he discovered the amazing WITCH'S MONEY JAR—now all he has to do is dip in, for it brings him an endless flow of cash! Evelyn, a waitress, was always lending money to friends, and was always broke. Finally, she placed her last dollar on the table, and worked the MONEY MAGNET SPELL over it. All at once, dozens of people who had borrowed money from her, rushed to pay her back!

Hank was perpetually broke. *One night he got together with* some friends, and they decided to cast the MONEY SPELL. The very next day, Hank received in the mail a check for some $250 worth of insurance. (He had never heard of the company that sent the check, he was not insured with them, and had never even made a claim—but he accepted the money.) Another member of the group that used the spell, a 40-year-old secretary, received an automobile as a gift! All the other members of the group received amazing windfalls of money, as well! You'll see how Dexter, a retiree, lives RENT FREE *and* receives $200 a week at the age of 78, with a secret you'll find in this Witch Book! You'll see how Claudine, a secretary, was able to wear the finest, most expensive furs—FREE—and spend weekends at an expensive ski lodge in the mountains, *where she met a wonderful man! How Ruth L., a widow—with noth*ing but a small pension, and a little savings—received her dream house, by using a simple 5-minute ritual on page 38 of this book!

Using the same Witchcraft secrets, YOU can achieve peace of mind and freedom from money worries for the rest of your life!

YOU CAN HEAL YOURSELF AS WITCHES DO!

Feeling sick today? Plagued by a lot of troublesome illnesses? Perhaps some relative is sick and constantly demanding your attention? Or perhaps it is even a pet that needs help? With the MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT, you can cure anything, say authors Gavin and Yvonne Frost: "In our experience . . . we have not found a single incurable disease!"

• **ANDY DISSOLVES A GALLSTONE!**—Andy M. developed gallstones. When his illness became too troublesome to ignore, he went to a doctor. Urine tests revealed that he was chronically alkaline. His body was badly out of balance. Using this Witchcraft method to restore balance to the mind and body—in a short while, X-rays showed that he had no more gallstones! Andy never again suffered the excruciating pain of passing stones!

In the same way, say Gavin and Yvonne Frost, almost all illness can be prevented. You are actually employing an ancient Witchcraft method to remove diseased tissue! Even if you do not have any belief in the results, the power will work for you!

One woman, who had been in a wheelchair for 26 years, due to *polio and arthritis, used the Witchcraft healing method, and re*ported that she had no pain and could walk and garden again! A man reported that his son's deep 3rd degree burns miraculously healed overnight!

• **SO SIMPLE A CHILD USES IT!**—A 4-year-old girl asked if she could try to heal a man who was limping—due to a torn ligament—with this simple Witchcraft healing method. In a matter of moments, she started her chant, laying her hands on the weak ankle. The man was miraculously cured! To skeptics, this should be convincing PROOF that anyone can use it!

AMAZING POWER CAN BE YOURS!

Whether you want infinite wealth, or just a comfortable new home, financial security, fine possessions, love, companionship, new health and vigor, power to control others, secret knowledge, protection from evil, or anything else, the magic power of Witchcraft can bring it to you quickly, easily and automatically! It's the easiest thing in the world!

• **HOW TO SEE INTO THE FUTURE!**—Would you like to be able to see the future? You CAN with the magic Black Mirror you'll see how to make on page 23. All you need is some ink and a bowl of *water. Then use the chant on this page, and you will be able to see* many things. One man uses it to read tomorrow's newspaper. YOU can use it to check the stock market or that important horse race!

• **MAKE TIME RUN BACKWARD OR FORWARD!**—A Witch uses ancient methods to make time stand still or to run it backward or forward! To make your face look young or old at will, all you need is some morning dew, and the instructions on page 27. You can fly through time and space, on astral wings, go anywhere, do anything, with the simple method on page 126. You can visit a friend, look in on an acquaintance and see what he is doing—even appear in someone's dreams, and convince that person to do whatever you wish!

• **SECRETS OF SILENT PERSUASION!**—There is a magic handshake that Witches often use, revealed on page 62. With this secret, you can implant a thought in someone's mind! You can use this Witchcraft power to dominate others! Control your boss! Make someone love you! Leave your enemies groveling in the dust! There is even a gazing technique Witches use on page 45, for identical thoughts. With this secret, you can read your friend's mind and share his or her identical thoughts!

SEND TODAY FOR YOUR NO-RISK COPY!

Witchcraft can make you rich, even in a ghetto! You should never have to worry about the rent, or where the next dollar is coming from, never have to apologize to a boss! No matter how poor you are now, THE MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT can bring you a life filled to the brim with pleasure, wealth, and all the glittering luxuries of the world! To get your copy of this amazing Witch Book, simply fill out and mail the no-risk coupon!

PROGRESS BOOKS, LTD.
3200 Lawson Blvd., Oceanside, N.Y. 11572

MAIL NO RISK COUPON TODAY!

PROGRESS BOOKS, LTD., Dept. W-213
3200 Lawson Blvd., Oceanside, N.Y. 11572

Gentlemen: Please rush me a copy of *THE MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT*, by Gavin Frost and Yvonne Frost! I enclose $8.98 in full payment. In addition, I understand that I may examine this book for a full 30 days entirely at your risk or money back.

☐ Check here if you wish your order sent C.O.D. Enclose only $1 good-will deposit now. Pay postman balance, plus C.O.D. postage and handling charges. Same money-back guarantee, of course.

NAME _____
Please print

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

N.Y. res. please add appropriate sales tax.

© P. B. LTD., 1976

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED LICENSED TO

NEMESIS PLACE

DAVID DRAKE

Men have searched over the ages for the secret of turning base metals into gold. Nemesius of Antioch had found that secret—at a terrible price!

Illustrated by Tony Gleeson

VETTIUS and his half-section of troops in armor filled the innkeeper's narrow office. "The merchant Dauod of Petra," he said, pointing his finger like a knifeblade at the shocked civilian's throat. "Which room?"

"S-second floor," stuttered the innkeeper, his face gone the color of tallow when the Emperor's soldiers burst in on him. "Nearest the ladder."

"Ulcius, you watch him," nodded the big legate to the nearest of his men. The other soldiers and Dama were already swinging toward the ladder that served as sole means of access to the inn's upper floors. Dama was half the bulk of any of the burly troops, an elfin man of Cappadocian stock whose blond hair was now part silver. He was not visibly armed, but neither had Vettius brought his friend on the raid to fight.

The fat teamster who had started down the ladder had sense enough to change direction as the soldiers came scrambling up. Their hobnailed sandals rasping the tiles were the only sound they made as they formed a semi-circle around the indicated doorway. Dulcitius, the Thracian centurion with a godling's face and a weasel's eyes, drew his sword silently. Vettius checked the position of his men, shifted so that his own armored body masked Dama, and kicked in the latched wooden door. All five of them were inside before the room's gray-haired occupant could sit up on his mattress.

"Your name and business, *now*!" Vettius thundered in Aramaic. He had not drawn his own long spatha, but either of his knotted fists was capable of pulping the frail man on the bed.

"Sirs, I'm Dauod son of Hafiz, nothing more than a trader in spices," the old man whined. His hands trembled as they indicated the head-sized spice caskets arrayed beneath the room's barred window.

"You were told right," Dama said with flat assurance. He had traded in more countries than most of the Empire knew existed, and the local dialects were as much a part of his memories as the products the people bartered. "That's not an Arab accent," he went on, "it's pure Persian. He may be a spice trader, but he's not from Petra or anywhere else inside the Empire."

The legate's square face brightened with triumph. "Amazing," he said, irony barbing his words. "I didn't realize there was anybody in Antioch who wasn't too busy listening for treason to bother telling us about a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Persian spy."

The old man cowered back against the wall, deforming the billet that served as pillow at the head of his bed. Vettius' practiced eye caught the angular hardness in the cloth. His hand shot out, jerking away the billet and spilling to the floor the dagger within it. Briefly no one moved. The Persian was hunched as though trying to crawl backwards into the plaster.

Dama toed the knife, listening critically to its ring. "Silver," he announced. "I don't think it's meant for a weapon. It's magic paraphernalia, like the robe it was wrapped in."

"Uh?" Vettius glanced at the coarse woolen blanket he had snatched and found that when it unrolled it displayed a garment of gauzy black silk as fine as a spider's weaving. In metal threads on the hem were worked designs that appeared notational but in no script with which the legate was familiar. Vettius kicked the silver dagger, the arthame, into the passageway and tossed the robe after it. He deliberately turned his back on the man who called himself Dauod. Bending, he grasped a handle and snaked out one of the bottom layer of spice caskets. It was of leather like the rest, its tight lid thonged to the barrel; but the workmanship was exceptionally good, and a recent polishing could not hide signs of great age. Vettius fumbled at the knot, then popped the fastening with a quick flexion of his fingers.

The old Persian gave a wordless cry and leaped for the legate's back. Dulcitius' sword darted like pale lightning, licking in at the Persian's jaw hinge and out the opposite temple in a spray of blood. Vettius spun with a bellow and slapped his centurion down with a bear-quick motion. "You idiot, who told you to kill him? Was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he going to hurt *me*?"

Dulcitius clanged as he bounced against the wall, his face as white as his tunic except where Vettius' broad handprint glowed on his cheek. His sword was still imbedded in the skull of the dead man thrashing on the floor, but a murderous rage roiled in his eyes. Unseen to the side, Dama freed the small knife concealed in his tunic.

"There was no call to do that," Dulcitius said slowly.

"There wasn't bloody call to kill the man before we even started to question him!" Vettius snarled back. "If you're too stupid to see that, you've got no business with officer rank—and I can see to that mistake very promptly, damn you. Otherwise, get downstairs with Ulcius. Find out from the innkeeper who this Dauod saw, what he did—every damn thing about him since he came to Antioch."

Vettius was by birth a Celtiberian, one of the black-haired, black-hearted race who had slammed a bloody door on the Teutoni and sent them stumbling back into the spears of Rome and Marius. Four and a half centuries had bled neither the courage of his forefathers nor their savagery from the tall legate; Dulcitius stared at him, then turned and left the room with neither a curse nor a backward glance.

"Start looking through his gear," Vettius said mildly to the remaining soldiers. "He's not going to tell us much himself."

The casket in his own hands sucked as he opened it to reveal a scroll and a glass bottle, round and nested in a leather hollow that held it firm. Vettius weighed the sphere in his hand. The silvery mercury that filled it had just enough air trapped with it beneath the seal to tremble.

Dama was already glancing at the scroll. "It's in Greek," he said frowning, "most of it. 'The record of the researches of Nemesius—' "

"His real name was Nemesius?" the legate interrupted.

" '—of Nemesius of Antioch,' " continued Dama unperturbed, " 'in the third year of the reign of the Emperor Valerianus.' "

The line troops had paused from opening chests filled only with spices. Vettius himself had the look of a man uncertain as to who is playing the trick on him. "Valerian," he repeated. "But he was killed. . . ."

"Almost a century ago," the Cappadocian finished for him in agreement. "What was a Persian wizard doing with a parchment written a century ago by a Greek philosopher?"

Vettius' tongue prodded his left cheek. He could command troops or seduce women in eight languages, was truly fluent in five of them; but only in Latin could he claim literacy. "I'll be pretty busy the next few days," he lied unnecessarily. "Why don't you read it yourself and tell me what you think of it?"

"Sestia'll probably be glad that I've found something to do for a few days besides pester her," Dama said with a fond smile. "Sure, it can't hurt for me to take a look at it."

THE MOON and three triple-wicked oil lamps lighted the pillared courtyard. Servants had cleared away the last of the platters, leaving the two friends to Chian wine and the warm Syrian night.

"I'm sorry Sestia got a headache at the last minute," Dama said. "I'd like the two of you to get better acquainted."

"She got the headache when she heard I was coming for dinner," re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

marked Vettius, more interested in straightening his tunic than what he was saying.

"You don't usually have that problem with women," gibed the merchant.

"She knows the kind of guy I am, that's all."

"Nobody who really knows you, Lucius, would think you'd seduce a friend's wife."

"Yeah, that's what I mean."

Dama drew an aimless design in wine lees on the marble table top. The legate glanced up, flushed, and gulped down the contents of his own cup. "Mithra," he apologized, "I've drunk too much already." Then, "Look, have you gotten anything out of the scroll? Neither the innkeeper nor anything we found in the room gives us a notion of what this Daoud was up to."

The Cappadocian set the leather case on the table and drew the parchment out of it. "Umm, yes, I've got a notion . . . but it's no more than that and you may want to call me a fool when I tell you."

"You aren't a fool," said Vettius quietly. "Tell me about the scroll."

"Nemesius of Antioch was searching for the secret of life and a way of turning base metals into gold. He wrote an account of his attempts here—" Dama spread the scroll slightly to emphasize it— "after he succeeded in both. Or so he says."

"Even that long ago I'd have heard of him if that was true," the soldier snorted.

"Except," Dama pointed out, "that was the year the Persians sacked Antioch. And Nemesius' villa was outside the walls." He spun the parchment to a passage he had noted. "'. . . leaving in place of the lead a column of living gold, equal to me in height and in diameter some three cubits.' Now, what I suspect is that your Daood was no spy. He was a wizard himself, not of the ability of Nemesius but able to understand the processes he describes and to believe they might work. He was a scholar, too, enough of one to read this scroll in a casket looted on whim a century ago; and a gambler besides to risk his life on its basis in a hostile empire."

"But for what?" Vettius demanded. "You said the place was sacked."

"Nemesius had an underground laboratory. He describes the secret entrance to it in this parchment," Dama replied. "It just could be that the Persian who found the chest—and probably Nemesius—above ground missed the passageway below. If so, the gold might still be there."

Vettius' intake of breath was that of a boy seeing for the first time a beautiful woman nude. "That much *gold*," he whispered. He sat up on his couch and leaned forward toward his friend, mind working like a tally board. "Hundreds of talents, maybe thousands. . . .If we could find that, we'd each be as rich as the Emperor's freedmen. What would you do with wealth like that, Dama?"

"I'd leave it to rot in the ground," the merchant said without inflection. Vettius blinked at the violence of the words and the Cappadocian's hard blue eyes. "I read you what Nemesius created," Dama went on. "I didn't read you how he went about it. Neither for eternal life nor for all the gold on earth would I have done half the things he claims to have done. There's an evil to that gold. It's dangerous, the danger reeks all through this parchment, though Nemesius never puts a name to why. Maybe he was afraid to. Let the gold lie for somebody in more need of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trouble than you or I are."

Vettius took the bulb of mercury from the casket to occupy his hands while he pondered. The bubble danced through the transparence, a mobile facet in the light of the oil lamps. The cap was of thin, carven gold, but the short neck of the bottle had been sealed with wax before the gold was applied.

"Why two seals, do you suppose?" Vettius asked rather than voice what was really on his mind.

"Quicksilver combines with gold, rots it into a paste," Dama explained. "The wax is the real closure, the metal over it just for show." He paused, continued when he saw the soldier was still not ready to speak. "Nemesius used quicksilver in his searching, both for life and for gold. He says he always carried this bottle with him, why I don't know. The manuscript doesn't explain."

"You've spent your life gathering gold, trading for gold, haven't you?" the big Spaniard rumbled, slipping the mercury back into the case and then looking at his wine cup.

"Yeah, I have," Dama agreed, his posture a conscious disavowal of the tension lacing the night. "Spices from Taprobane, silks from India. Once I went all the way to the Serian lands for silk, but the extra profit wasn't worth the danger."

"All your life looking for gold and you tell *me* not to dig an emperor's ransom out of the ground when it's right here waiting. I don't understand it, Dama." Vettius raised his voice and his eyes together. "You're playing a game of some sort and I don't know what it is!"

"No game at all," said Dama, still quietly. He faced his friend as he had once faced a gut-shot bear. The merchant had seen other men suddenly besotted with an idea—a cavalryman hammered into fanaticism by the majesty of his Arian God, a shipmaster so certain that a fourth continent lay west of Ireland that he convinced a full crew to disappear with him in search of it. A jest, even a misspoken word, would send such men into murderous frenzies. "Sure, I love gold, but I know it. I'm not joking at all, Lucius, when I say there's a wrong feel to this hoard. I'll help you any way I can to see that you find it, but I'll have no portion of what Nemesius left."

Slowly Vettius reached for the wine bowl and bent a rueful smile onto his face. "That's fair," he said as he poured for both of them. "A good bit too fair, but we'll worry over that when the gold's in our hands, hey?" He paused; then, too eagerly for his pretense of calm, he blurted, "You think there's a real chance of locating Nemesius' cellars after this time?"

Dama nodded. "Let me think about it. There's a way to do most things if you think about them a while."

The soldier sipped, then gulped his unmixed wine to the lees and stood up. The light bronzed his skin and made each bristle of his nascent beard a spearpoint. "I'll be off, then," he said. "I—I really appreciate all you've done, will do, Dama. It isn't for me, not really; but if I had wealth enough to make those idiots in Constantinople listen to what I say about the army. . . ."

Dama clapped him on the arm. "As you said, we'll talk about that when the gold's in your hands."

After his friend had left behind his lamp-carrier, drunken but erect and with a vicious smile on his face that no footpad would dare to trouble, Dama returned to the courtyard. Sestia's room would be locked. From

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

past experience Dama knew to stay out of her wing of the house and not make a fool of himself before her servants, trying to wheedle his wife out of her pique through bolted wood. Instead, he fingered the bulb of mercury, then re-opened the scroll beside it. When dawn began to sear the marble facings of the court he was still at the table dictating notes to the sleepy clerk he had dragged from bed three hours before.

"YOU'RE SURE that's the place?" said Vettius, a neutral figure in the dusk unless one noted the tip of the scabbard lifting the hem of his long travelling cloak. The mud-brick warren around them scampered with the sounds of furtive life, some of it human, but no one approached the friend.

"I'm not *sure* the sun will rise in the morning," retorted Dama, "but there's plenty of evidence, yes, that Nemesius' villa was here. He disappeared in the first sack, probably burned with his buildings. His heirs sold the tract to a developer to run up a cheap apartment block—land outside the walls wasn't considered a good place for fancy houses right then. Which shows good sense, because when the Persians came back three years later they burned the apartments too."

There had been signs of that during daylight, ancient scorch marks on the rubble still heaped among the rank weeds. "Strange that no one rebuilt since," said Vettius, squinting to sharpen his twilit image of the barren acre before him.

"The site had gotten a reputation." Dama shrugged his own worn cloak loose, shifting his grip on the leathern chest he carried. "That's really what made it possible to find it." He gestured. "There's a lot of people in the city—the dregs who live here, even the ones a few levels removed who associate with them—who know what you mean when you ask about Nemesius' estate that was somewhere off the Sidon road. 'Oh, yeah,' they say, 'Nemesis Place'. Their faces tighten up and they add, 'What do you want with that, anyway? Nobody goes around there.' "

The little merchant flicked his gaze once more around the darkness. "Not quite true, of course. People cut down saplings for firewood here. Probably some of them sleep in the ruins now and again. They don't stay long, though. Nothing in particular, just uneasiness. 'Nemesis Place'."

"Balls," said Vettius, beginning to stride into the clearing. "I don't feel uneasy."

"You didn't look very comfortable when we slipped out the gate this afternoon," commented Dama as he trotted alongside, casket thumping his thigh. "Second thoughts, or you just don't like to sneak by your own men and not be able to scream that their bronze hasn't been polished?"

Vettius slowed and glanced at his friend. Surprise audible in his voice, he said, "You know me too well. I don't like them thinking they can ignore me just because I've told them we'll be gone three days, hunting in the hills. Dulcitius was supposed to command the gate guard today, but because they think I'm gone already he seems to have traded time with Furianus without having cleared it with me."

Dama stumbled, more in anger than from the fragment of stone in the brush. "Dulcitius," he repeated. "I've seen him hanging around my gate. Tell him for me that I'll kill him if I ever catch him there again."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't fool with that one," said Vettius very softly.

"I'm not afraid," Dama snapped.

"Dama, you know about a lot of things I don't," the soldier said. "But take my word about killers. Don't ever think of going up against Dulcitius alone."

"This is far enough," said Dama, changing the subject as a pile of masonry loomed up in front of them. Beside it he knelt to light a thick tallow candle with the slow match he had brought in a terra-cotta jar. "They followed the villa's groundplan when they built the apartments," he explained. "Used the old foundations. I checked yesterday and the cap slab over the hidden stairway is still in place."

"Did you open it?"

Dama ignored the suspicion leaking out in his friend's tones. "I couldn't, not without either you or a team of mules. Finally decided I'd use you."

The air was so still that the candle flame pulsed straight up at the moonless sky. By its light Vettius saw set in what had been a courtyard pavement the mosaic slab beneath which Nemesius had described his stairway as lying. The pattern laid over a counter-weighted bronze plate was of two intertwined dragons, one black and the other white. It was impossible to tell whether the beasts were battling, mating, or—just possibly—fissioning. Their tails were concealed beneath a concrete panel which had skewed across the mosaic when the building collapsed.

"I brought a sledge," said Dama, extracting the tool from the double sling beneath his right arm, "but I'll let you do the work."

"Umm," mumbled Vettius, considering the obstructing concrete. It had been part of a load-bearing wall, hand's-breath thick and fractured into a width of about three feet. The far end disappeared under a pile of other rubble. Vettius tossed aside his cloak and squatted over the slab, his hands turned backward to grip its irregular edge.

Dama frowned. "Dis, you'll need the hammer."

"Very likely," Vettius agreed, "but that's a lot of racket that I'd like to avoid if we can." He stiffened, his face flushing as tendons sprang out on his neck. The slab quivered. His linen tunic ripped down to his waist. Then his thighs straightened and the slab pivoted on its buried end, sliding back a foot before the off-balance soldier sat down on it.

"After—what? Twenty-six years?—you still have the ability to surprise me, Lucius," said Dama. He knelt and twisted at one of the circular tiles in the border until metal clicked. The mosaic rocked upward at an additional finger's pressure on one end.

Vettius stood, shrugged, and straightened his scabbard. "Let's go," he said, reaching for the candle.

"A moment." Dama folded his cloak, lumpy with hints of further preparations against unknown needs. From his sash he stripped everything but an additional candle and his own sword, a foot shorter than Vettius' spatha but heavy and chisel-sharp on both edges. Drawing it before he lifted the casket in his left hand he said, "All right, I'm ready."

"Are you that worried?" Vettius asked with a grin. "And if you are, why're you lugging that box along?"

"Because I *am* that worried. Nemesius says he carried it, and he knew a lot more about what he was getting into than you or I do."

The flight of brick steps was steep and narrow, dropping twenty feet to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pavement of living rock. The candle burned brightly although the air had a metallic odor, a hint that was more an aftertaste. The gallery into which the stairwell opened was a series of pilastered vaults whose peaks reached close to the surface. The candle suggested the magnitude it could not illuminate.

"Mithra," Vettius said, raising the light to the full height of his arm, "how can you have a secret vault when it's so big half of Antioch must have been down here swinging picks to excavate it?"

"Yes, I've wondered how he got it excavated too," Dama said. He did not amplify on the question.

The walls were veneered with colored marble. A narrow shelf at shoulder height divided the panels, smooth below but relieved with all manner of symbols and fanciful beasts from ledge to ceiling. The technical craftsmanship was good, but execution of the designs showed a harshness akin to that of battle standards.

"He doesn't seem to have needed all this room," the soldier remarked as they entered the third vault. It held a dozen long racks of equipment and stoppered bottles, but even that was but partial use of its volume.

They circled the racks. The last of the four vaults was not empty either. "Oh dear Jesus," whispered Dama while his bigger companion muttered, "Mithra, Mithra, Mithra," under his breath. A low stone dais stood in the center of the chamber. Nemesius must have been a tall man: The column of gold he referred to as being as tall as he was would have overtopped even Vettius standing beside it. He must have measured by the long cubit as well, for the diameter of the mass was certainly over five feet. Its surface was irregular, that of waves frozen as they chopped above a rip tide, and bloody streaks shot through the bulk of yellower metal.

"Oh, yes. . . ." Vettius said, drawing his spatha and stepping toward the gold.

"Careful, Lucius," Dama warned. "I don't think we'd better hack off a piece yet. Nemesius gives a formula for 'unbinding' the column. I think I ought to read that first."

Vettius made a moue of irritation but said only, "We haven't found any tricks, but yeah, that doesn't mean that he didn't play some." He held the candle close as Dama opened the casket and unrolled the parchment to the place he needed.

The merchant had sheathed his own sword. Kneeling and drawing a deep breath, he read aloud in Greek, "In the names by which you were bound, Saloë, Pharippa, Phalertos, I unbind you."

Voice gathering strength from the husky whisper with which he had begun, Dama read the next line in Persian, using the old pronunciation: "By the metals in which you were locked in death, lead, sulphur, quicksilver, I free you to life."

There were five more sentences in the spell, each of them in a different tongue; Vettius understood none of them. One reminded him of phrases mumbled by a horseman who rode with a squadron of Sakai irregulars but who came from much farther east. At the climax, Dama's voice was an inhuman thunder explicable only as a trick of the room's accoustics. "Acca!" he shouted, "Acca! Acca!"

The words struck the gold like hammer-blows and it slumped away from them. The column sagged, mushroomed, and began to flow across the dais before resolidifying. A single bright streak zigged from the main

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mass like a stream across mudflats. "What in the name of Dis did you do?" Vettius cried. The candle in his hand trembled as he held it up.

The metal seemed rigid. It had fallen into an irregular dome over most of the dais and some of the rock beneath it. "As if we'd heated it," Dama said. "But. . . ." He reached up, ignited his other taper from the flame of the first, and set it on the floor beside the leather case. Then he stepped toward the dais while Vettius waited, torn by anger and indecision.

Two rivulets streamed outward to meet the Cappadocian's approach. He paused. Vettius shifted the spatha in his hand and said, "Dama, I—"

Dama sprang back as the golden streamlets froze, then scissored through the air. Hair-fine and rigid as sword edges, they slit the flapping hem of his tunic but missed the flesh. The dome itself lurched toward the men, moving from the dais with the deceptive speed of a millipide crawling across a board set in its path.

Dama scooped at the handle of the leather box. He caught it, missed his footing, and skidded it a dozen feet across the stone. Vettius had turned and run back toward the chamber's entrance. His candle went out at his first loping stride but the one still lighted on the floor caught a glittering movement ahead of him. "Lucius!" Dama shouted, but the big soldier had seen the same tremor and his sword was slashing up and outward to block the golden thread extruded when the column first collapsed. Steel met gold and the softer metal sang as it parted. The severed tip spun to the floor and pooled while the remainder of the thin tentacle wavered, still blocking the only exit. Ruddy streaks rippled through the main bulk as it closed on its victims.

Vettius cut again at the gold before him but it had thickened after its initial injury, forming a bar that only notched on impact. With a python's speed it looped on the blade and snatched it from the Spaniard's grip. Dama had taken two steps and jumped, using his left hand to help boost his whole lithe body up onto the shoulder-high ledge. Vettius saw the leap, spun like a tiger to follow. Nemesius' casket was open on the floor. Dama stared, understood, and cried, "The quicksilver! Break it on—"

Vettius bent and snatched up the glittering bulb of liquid. He raised it high as the fluid mass threw out a sheet which lapped across his ankles. Able but unwilling to act he moaned, "Oh dear Gods, the gold!" and the sheet bulged into a quilt as the whole weight of metal began to flow over him.

Dama leaned forward, judging distance with the cool precision with which he would have weighed a bolt of silk in his warehouse. The swift arc of his sword overbalanced him as he knew it would. He was falling onto the swelling monster below at the instant his point shattered the glass ball in his friend's hand. Droplets of mercury spewed across the mass of gold and fused with it.

The chamber exploded in a flash of red. Momentarily the walls blazed with the staring, shadowless eyes of the beasts limned on the frieze. Slowly, dazzled but not blinded, the two men pulled themselves free of gritty muck while their retinas readapted to the light of the single candle. Where they had been exposed to the flash their skins had the crinkly, prickly feel of sunburn.

"You took a chance there," Vettius said matter-of-factly. Most of the gold

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed to have disintegrated into a powder of grayish metal, lead to judge by its weight. Where the mercury had actually splashed were clinging pools with an evil, silvery luster. "When I locked up like I did, you could have gotten out along the ledge."

"I've got enough on my conscience without leaving a friend to that," Dama said.

"I knew what had to be done, but I just couldn't . . . destroy it," the soldier explained. He was on his knees, furrowing the edge of the lead dust deeply with his hands. "That gold . . . and I'm damned if I can understand why, now, but that gold was worth more to me than my life was. Guess that's what you need friends for, to do for you what you won't do for yourself."

Dama had retrieved the candle and held it high. "Some other time we'll talk that over with a philosopher. Now let's get out of here before we find some other goody our friend Nemesius left."

"Give me a moment. I want to find my sword."

The merchant snorted. "If you cared as much about some woman—*one* woman—as you do about that sword, Lucius, you'd be a happier man. You know, right now I feel like I had been gone the three days I told Sestia I would."

"Found it," said Vettius, carefully wiping hilt and blade on his tunic before sheathing the weapon. "Let's go back and greet your wife."

LATER THAT NIGHT Dama understood a number of things. As stunned as a hanged man, he gurgled "Sestia!" through the shattered door to his wife's chamber. The centurion's sword and dagger were on a table near the bed, and Dulcitius was very quick; but Vettius had drawn before he kicked in the panel. Nothing would stop the overarm cut of his spatha, certainly not the bedding nor the two squirming bodies upon it.

—DAVID DRAKE

Power Failure (cont. from page 27)

half and meet him in his?

Sarah read Carl's note again. Then she folded it and replaced it in the book. She went to the window, and threw it open. The morning air was mild, and the west wind, warm and moisture-laden, carried in to her the eternal promsie of the coming spring.

—CHARLES SHEFFIELD

ON SALE NOW IN JANUARY AMAZING

THE SLEEPING BEAST by **A. BERTRAM CHANDLER, A HOUSEHOLD PRIMER** by **CHRISTOPHER ANVIL, THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!** by **STEPHEN TALL, THE SPACE ROC** by **ROBERT F. YOUNG, THE LOOKING GLASS OF THE LAW** by **KEVIN O'DONNELL, A FORBIDDEN WORLD** by **DAVE BISCHOFF & TED WHITE,** THE AMAZING INTERVIEW: **EDMOND HAMILTON & LEIGH BRACKETT** by DARRELL SCHWEITZER.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE THREE-LEGGED CHICKEN

BRAD LANG

It stretched the long arm of coincidence, but the things which happened to Fred Walker were unbelievable in their implications . . .

Illustrated by DAN STEFFAN

"WE'LL GET YOU, Frank."

The telephone jangled once, he picked up the receiver, said hello, a voice said, "We'll get you, Frank," then the line went dead. That was all.

His name wasn't Frank. It was Fred. Fred Walker. Was there now some poor victim cheated out of his fair warning, some sad, surprised sucker who was later to be found dead in a load-lugger, wearing an unexpected icepick in his pancreas?

Or was the call in fact meant for him? Perhaps they didn't know his name. Or they *did* know it, but the caller suffered a slip of the tongue, came up with the wrong name, then realized his error but hung up without correcting himself so as not to appear foolish.

It would have sounded fairly foolish: "We'll get you, Frank . . . uh, Fred."

When another man called several days later and said, "We'll get you, Tom," Fred Walker began to feel distinctly insulted. If some gang of cutthroats was really out to kill him or beat him up or whatever, they could at least get his name right. Bad enough to be a victim, but to be an incorrectly named victim—that was even worse.

Fred Walker was used to being insulted. For as long as he could remember he had been surrounded by an army of insensitive, rude and uncooperative people. All the cabdrivers, waitresses, hotel clerks, librarians, gas pump jockeys and bag boys he met were uniformly unfriendly. He suspected this was not entirely accidental. He once confided this suspicion, at some length, to his best friend, Carl Bean. Carl told him he was being paranoid. Fred didn't see much of Carl after that.

FRED WALKER came home from work one day and found his cat murdered, strangled, a length of picture-hanging wire around its furry neck. Next to the unfortunate creature he found an open telephone book which was later discovered to have absorbed a single drop of feline blood. On closer inspection the stain was seen to have penetrated a number of pages, on one of which was his own name. The tiny red dot appeared directly between his address and telephone number.

CARL BEAN and the murdered cat were only two episodes in a long history of aborted relationships. Not all of them ended tragically, to be sure,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

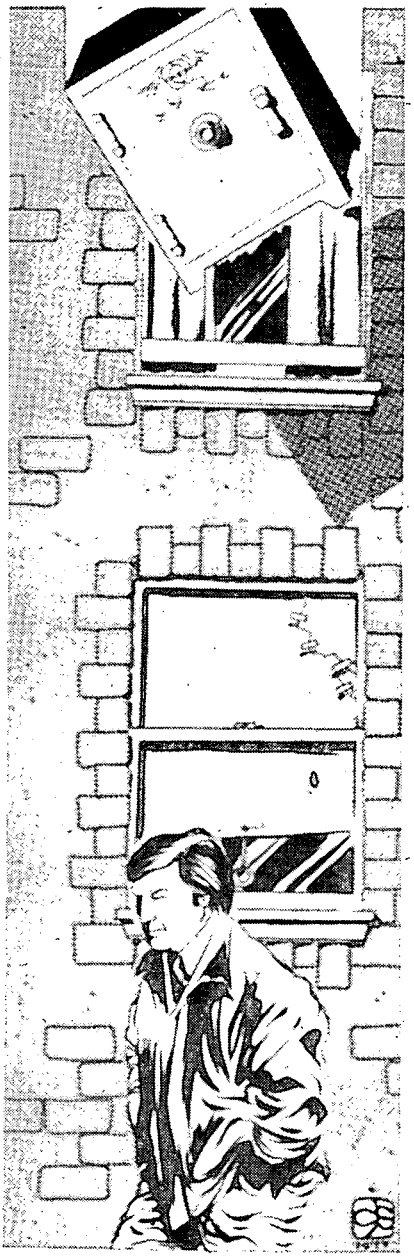
although some did, to be equally sure. The guy who sat next to him in gym class in high school, a greaser named Pete Keefer, had fallen from the climbing rope and broken his back. His last girlfriend had gone Upstate for an abortion (somebody else's) and had gotten hit by a car while hitch-hiking back home. She hadn't really been his girlfriend.

Usually they just drifted away from him. Sometimes they literally disappeared. In any case, he never remembered doing anything to provoke a walkout. Although his company was not the most exciting to be found, he was neither sullen nor argumentative, and with women he was a perfect gentleman, aside from an occasional subtle, always futile attempt to get one or another of them into bed without benefit of the proper amenities.

The amenities having been observed, he was usually able to get them into bed, but never more than once.

In this sexual phenomenon he detected some conspiratorial hand. It was what finally tipped him off to the pattern. Though he might have been inclined to have dismissed the cat murder as the work of some stray lunatic and the phone calls as harmless pranks and everything else as coincidence, this sex thing was just what it appeared to be. There was no logical reason why every woman he ever laid should disappear directly following the first fuck. It was just too much.

In fact, if was no longer a question of whether or not something was going on, but rather which things were part of the pattern and which were not. Winnowing out the significant events was, for him, rather like trying to separate the pieces of a dozen combined jigsaw puzzles, each



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a different view of the Grand Canyon.

His first sexual experience was with a girl he met in his eleventh grade biology class. Her name was Mona Witherspoon. She had curly black hair and brown eyes and liked to do the Twist. They used to Twist their way through many a Friday night dance.

One Saturday evening Mona threw a party at her house while her parents were out of town. She and Fred did the Twist all night, and after the rest of the guests departed they did the Twist on the double bed in her mother and father's bedroom. It was everything Fred had ever hoped for. Mona said she loved him. He pedaled home at one a.m. in a state of great delirium and received a severe scolding for being out so late. The following Monday Mona Witherspoon's entire family moved to Cincinnati.

As soon as the pattern became evident to him, Fred sat down and made a list of all the bad things that had ever happened to him. He would remember new items all the time, write them down in his notebook and transfer the entries to 3×5 cards. The cards were placed in a carefully cross-referenced file. The telephone calls, for example, were entered under Telephone Calls—Threatening, Identity—Mistaken, Frank and Tom. Each card had the heading, approximate date and a brief summary of the event in question.

He was working on his second file. The first one had been destroyed when the apartment building in which he was living burned to the ground. That event had the dubious distinction of being the first entry in his new file.

A great deal of care had to be exercised when making entries in the file. A stubbed toe, for example, clearly did not qualify, for although it was indeed a bad thing that had happened to him, the element of conspiracy was missing. A second party could strangle his cat, burn down his apartment building, make a threatening phone call—but said second party could not stub his toe. This was a calamity of his own making.

Needless to say, there were surely many items in Fred's file that did not involve foul play by any person other than himself, and he knew this. But it was always safer, he felt, to assume the contrary. It made the pattern stronger and so far easier to deal with.

Still, he often worried that a specious inclusion might lead him down an illegitimate pathway in his investigation. If you were drawing a connect-the-dot chicken, for example, and you inadvertently included a couple of fly-specks in the diagram, you would be liable to end up with a three-legged chicken. Such are the chances one takes.

Fred Walker was twenty-eight years old, unmarried and incapable of holding a job. He had occupied as many different stations in life as the Wabash Cannonball. He once made a list of all his occupations: Paperboy, hamburger cook, gas station attendant, student, cab driver, librarian, disc jockey, boy scout, bartender, bus boy, janitor, baby sitter, bank teller, factory worker, folksinger, garbageman, telephone solicitor and several different kinds of clerk. He had sold magazines, sporting goods, hardware, records, marijuana, motorcycles, watermelons and advertising. His careers generally lasted no longer than his relationships. He had seldom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been actually fired, but the partings were always a matter of mutual desire.

His latest position involved driving a delivery truck for a local repair shop. He was convinced that sooner or later the brakes—already shrieking in agony at the slightest touch—would fail completely and zoom he'd go into the path of a fully loaded cement mixer, careen through the plate-glass front window of a supermarket, scattering canned peas and paper towels all over the parking lot.

His hobbies were similarly unsuccessful. He once bought a motorcycle, a beautiful Honda 450. He had always wanted one. He used to watch all the fraternity men riding around town on their Suzukis and thought how very happy they must be.

It took him six months and three jobs to save enough money to purchase the bike. On its maiden voyage a large tree limb fell on his head and knocked him off. The cycle continued on its course for a wobbly one hundred feet and totaled itself out against a brick building. It seemed even the trees had it in for him.

ALMOST EVERY DAY Fred's mailbox contained at least one notice of an overdue parking ticket. Once in a while he would receive an official letter informing him that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. He remembered being given only one parking ticket since he had first earned his license.

He very seldom drove, especially after the incident with the motorcycle. Automobiles hated his guts. So, apparently, did the city police computer. It was putting entirely too much faith in the fallibility of science to assume that the machine was merely mistaken in its assumption that he owned a 1959 Chevrolet Impala, a 1972 Pontiac Grand Prix, a 1963 Volkswagon bus and a Jeep, all with different license numbers. There was clearly a limit to how confused a computer could get.

No warrant had ever been served. He did not know why. The police most assuredly had enough on him to put him away for the rest of his life. He visualized a platoon from the tactical squad breaking down his door, armed with hundreds of warrants, throwing him spread-eagled against the wall, informing him of his rights.

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, Fred Walker had parents. It was a fact he sometimes forgot, like a casually misplaced ball-point pen. There wasn't much about them to stick in the memory.

Marvin Walker worked in an anonymous machine shop. He was an anonymous machine shop worker who turned out parts and widgits according to specifications handed down to him by highly-placed persons. The purpose of the products he produced was always a mystery. He only followed instructions.

A certain percentage of his creations would be rejected. He never knew why. He would patiently create more, of which a certain percentage would again be rejected for unknown defects. This process would continue until he had filled his quota of defectless thingamajigs. Then he would be given a new set of blueprints. He had been doing this so long that he no longer remembered what he had been doing previously. Perhaps he had been doing nothing.

His wife Erma watched television. Between nine am and six pm there was a total of one and one-half hours during which there was nothing on television to interest her. She spent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this time cleaning and cooking and doing the laundry. When Marvin came home they watched television together. Their favorite program was *Let's Make A Deal,* followed closely by *Little House On The Prairie.* One night a week they played Perquacky with the neighbors.

Fred seldom visited his parents. They had nothing to say to each other. During his last visit Fred cried softly and waved file cards while his mother fidgited on the couch, afraid her son's sobbing might blot out an important snatch of dialogue on a re-run of *The Brady Bunch.* Fred finally exited quietly, pausing to steal five dollars from his mother's purse.

"Damn strange kid," said Marvin, while Erma nodded absently. The Brady's cat was stuck up a tree.

FRED was sitting in his room one evening, reading science fiction stories, when there came a knock on his door. He opened it to find a tall man in a trenchcoat who stared at him for a moment, then said, "Fred Walker?"

"That's me."

Then man pushed on past and established himself in the center of the room. He looked around with the air of a concert violinist in a room full of third-rate bluegrass fiddlers.

"Uh . . ." said Fred.

"Well?" said the tall man.

There was a moment of silence. "You aren't," Fred mumbled, "here about the parking tickets, are you?"

"The what?"

"Listen, I've been meaning to take care of those, but. . ."

"I don't know what you're talking about," the tall man stated, peering at Fred suspiciously.

"You don't?"

"I'm here for the microfilm, of course."

"The what?"

"The microfilm." He looked around impatiently. "You know."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Look, fella, I haven't got much time. Just hand over the stuff and I'll . . ."

"But I haven't got it!" Fred croaked in protest. "You've got the wrong guy!"

"You're Fred Walker, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but . . ."

"Then you're the right guy."

There was something wrong with this simple logic, Fred knew, but he couldn't quite put his finger on what it was. He continued to argue with the man, but to no avail. At one point it almost seemed there would be violence. Finally the man gave up. At the door he paused, turned and said, "We'll get you, Fred."

At least, thought Fred, they had finally gotten his name right.

THAT NIGHT Fred Walker dreamt that a man came to his door, a tall man wearing a trenchcoat. The trenchcoat was purple and the man's face was green—just like the creatures in one of the stories Fred had been reading before he went to sleep, a story about beings from the third planet of the Alpha Centauri group.

"Your name Frank?" the man asked.

"No," Fred replied. "It's Fred."

The man pushed Fred aside and entered his room, taking long, careful steps, like giant steps in a game of Simon Says. He continued to the far wall, then turned and came back part of the way and stopped and looked at Fred, who was standing dumbfounded in his doorway, watching this performance with clouded eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Uh . . ." Fred said.

"We were given your name, Frank," the man said casually.

"I don't . . ." Fred started to say.

"Of course not," the man interrupted. "They never do."

"Who are you?" Fred demanded.

"I'll ask the questions, if you don't mind," the man said rudely. He reached into his trenchcoat pocket and brought out a small notebook. "Do you know a young lady by the name of Mona Witherspoon?"

"Huh?"

The man once again reached into his coat pocket and came up with a photograph and handed it to Fred. It was a photo of him and Mona making love on the double bed in her parents' bedroom.

"My God!" Fred exclaimed.

"Just answer the question, please. Do you know her?"

Fred made a strangled noise. "Whaa . . . where did you . . . I mean . . ."

The man carefully recorded these statements in his notebook. When Fred's babbling had subsided the man retrieved the photograph and returned it to his pocket.

"It . . . you . . . how did . . ."

"Now please don't start that again," the man said reproachfully. "You have no idea how difficult it is to get that sort of thing down on paper."

At that moment the door flew open and a short, heavy-set, purple-faced man in a green trenchcoat burst into the room and pointed an accusing finger at the green-faced man in the purple trenchcoat.

"Gotcha!" shouted the newcomer, lunging at his apparent adversary. A short and silent tussle ensued, the result of which was that the short, purple-faced man conked the mysterious green questioner over the head with a blackjack, causing him to assume a prone position on Fred's floor.

"Gaaaa . . ." Fred gurgled.

"Shut up," barked the new stranger. "This whole mess is your fault, you know! Christ Almighty, the polarities alone are enough to make an Aldeberanian Dirt-Sucker spit up!"

"Is he . . . dead?" Fred inquired fearfully.

"Of course not! Jesus, but you're dumb!"

"I'm sorry," Fred mumbled.

"Always apologizing, too. You're a real sad character." He made a quick visual search of the room, then shrugged his shoulders in annoyance. "No place for him here. I'll just have to take him with me." He bent over, grabbed the unconscious man under his shoulders and began dragging him out of the room.

"Do you, uh, want some help?" Fred asked timidly.

"When I need your help, I'll ask for it. Haven't you caused enough trouble already, Frank?"

"Fred," said Fred.

The man continued ranting. "I've never seen anything like it. There've been so many stasis alerts this month alone that I've barely had time for a bite of largel." He paused in his labors and looked at Fred. "You wouldn't happen to have any, would you?"

"No."

"That figures."

"Listen," Fred said anxiously. "You say this whole thing is my fault. What can I do about it?"

The man regarded him solemnly. "Nothing," he said. "Forget it. That's the best thing you can do. Just forget it." He continued dragging his burden out the door and down the hall.

The tall man regained consciousness suddenly, opened his eyes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked at Fred and winked. Fred stepped back quickly and shut his door. He leaned against it breathlessly until he could no longer hear the bumping of the tall man's heels as his body was dragged down the wooden steps. He counted to fifty just to be sure. When he opened the door there was an orange-faced man standing there grinning at him.

"Your name Tom?" asked the man.

Fred slammed the door in his face and listened to his laughter and his heavy steps receding down the hallway. Even when there was only silence in the building, Fred did not open the door again. He tried peeking through the keyhole, but there wasn't any keyhole.

FRED DECIDED there was no place in the real world for the kind of things that had been happening to him. He could no longer distinguish between the events of his dreams and those of his waking moments. The conclusion was inescapable. He went to a psychiatrist.

"You," said Dr. Hornbuckle, "have bats in your belfry."

Fred was both troubled and relieved. Though it was reassuring to have his problem diagnosed by a careful professional opinion, it was in many ways a worse thing to have bats in your belfry than it was to have poltergeists in your closet.

"You are a screwball nut," opined Dr. Hornbuckle, only the slightest trace of fear in his voice.

The psychiatrist had a Van Dyke. Fred had always thought Van Dykes were evil. Van Dykes and mutton chops. He had once resolved never to grow a beard or a mustache for fear he would come to look malevolent himself. Perhaps that was his problem.

"You should be locked up."

A curiously unprofessional person, thought Fred. For the money he was getting for his consultation, it would seem that he could offer more than a stream of invective.

"What can I do about it?" Fred asked, almost hesitantly, dreading the answer.

"Stop fighting it," said Dr. Hornbuckle slowly. The psychiatrist rose from his desk and looked at Fred critically. "Forget it. Give up. Cooperate. If somebody is out to get you, they'll probably get you eventually, anyway. They're professionals, after all. If they aren't, it can't possibly hurt you. If you ignore it. Do you understand?"

"No."

"It doesn't matter." He sighed heavily, turned his back and stood looking out the window. "Pay the nurse as you leave."

Fred hesitated for a moment, then slowly backed out of the office and into the waiting room. He was about to reach for his wallet when the office door flew open and a young woman entered wildly, her eyes watering profusely, her long coat unbuttoned and flapping behind her.

"I wanta see the doctor!" she yelled, rushing toward the door to the inner office.

The nurse, a lady of truly staggering proportions, who moved very quickly for a woman of her width and breadth, inserted her body between the girl and the inner office door. "I'm sorry, but you'll have to have an appointment," she said evenly.

"But the doctor won't give me an appointment!" the girl wailed.

"Well," the nurse smiled, "then I guess you can't see him."

"But I have to! I can't stand it anymore! They're driving me crazy!" She turned wildly to Fred. "He told

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me to forget about it! Not to worry! It's impossible." She plopped down in a chair in the waiting room and began crying softly.

As though drawn by invisible strings, Fred Walker sat down beside her and put his hand on her shoulder. "Hey," he said.

She was crying and babbling incoherently. Fred pretended to understand what she was trying to tell him, nodding and saying, "Of course" and "uh-huh" at what seemed like appropriate moments. Finally the girl stopped crying and inclined her face in Fred's direction. She was very pretty.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Fred Walker. I'm a patient of Dr. Hornbuckle's. At least, I was."

She shuddered, as though the mention of the shrink's name gave her cold chills. "Did he tell you to give up and cooperate and not to fight it?"

"Yes."

The girl looked surprised and hopeful. "He did?"

"Yeah. I just finished talking to him. He told me I had bats in my belfry."

"Me, too!" She grabbed Fred's arms tightly. Then she said thoughtfully, "Maybe he tells that to everybody."

Fred looked at her with questions in his eyes. Finally he spoke. "Do you think . . . do you think maybe we've got the same problem?"

They looked at each other silently for many long moments. Their eyes met, locked, held tightly. Finally Fred stood and took her hand.

"Let's get out of here," he said.

HER NAME was Judy and she had just escaped from a band of crazed Arab UN delegates who thought she was an Israeli secret agent. She had been working in a candy counter in the lobby of the UN building when a Syrian diplomat was gunned down in front of her station. One thing led to another. As it always did.

Judy and Fred sat drinking coffee in a little cafe near Dr. Hornbuckle's office, breathlessly exchanging tales of persecution.

"My cat was strangled," said Fred, gently touching Judy's hand.

"My dog was poisoned," said Judy, smiling shyly and lowering her gaze.

Fred found it hard to believe that here, at last, was someone who truly understood, someone who had been living the same nightmare. Besides being overjoyed at finding a fellow victim, he was also anxious to discover if he could break his one-roll-in-the-hay-and-out curse. They walked and held hands and exchanged smiles until an anonymous bomb threat forced them to leave the restaurant.

They were strolling down the street—trying to avoid taxicabs that kept hopping the curb—when a band of crazed Arab UN delegates jumped them from behind. Judy screamed and Fred struggled, but it was no use.

The Arabs dragged Judy away with them, leaving Fred lying on the pavement in a state approching unconsciousness. Just before he passed out one of the burnoosed kidnappers leaned over and looked into his face. Except for the color of his skin, he looked vaguely like the short, purple-faced man in Fred's dream. The Arab sneered at Fred and tweaked his nose.

"Allah, but you're dumb!" he said.

FRED WALKER regained consciousness just as an elderly blind man was about to stab him in the eye with his white cane.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gaaah!" Fred screamed and rolled out of the way just in time. He bumped into a pair of legs attached to a policeman.

"Hey, watch where yer rollin!" the cop exclaimed.

"I'm sorry," Fred explained, struggling to his feet, "but you see, I was with this girl and she was abducted by some Arabs."

The cop stared at Fred suspiciously. "Arabs," he said.

"Yes. I met her at Dr. Hornbuckle's office and . . ."

"The psychiatrist?"

"Uh-huh. She works at the UN. We were just walking down the street and . . ."

"Wait a minute." The cop took Fred's arm. "I think you better come along with me, buddy."

"My name's Fred," said Fred.

FRED soon found himself seated in the office of Lieutenant Bertrand, a New York Police Department psychiatrist. Lieutenant Bertrand listened patiently while Fred blurted out an abbreviated version of his life story, up to and including his recent run-in with the crazed Arabs. At the conclusion of Fred's sad story the Lieutenant rose and began pacing his tiny office.

"I think I may have the answer," Bertrand said, after a moment. "Not a solution, mind you, but an explanation."

"That's all right," Fred urged. "I'll take whatever I can get."

Bertrand stopped pacing and looked down at Fred. "Your problem involves statistics," he said.

"Statistics?" Fred mumbled.

"I have a minor in Stat. from City College," Bertrand said. "I was going to be an intelligence analyst for the CIA, but I couldn't get a security clearance. So here I am with the NYPD. God only knows why."

"So what about my problem?" Fred prompted anxiously.

"Yes, Well, you see, it's rather complicated." He resumed his seat behind the desk and began playing with a pencil. "You are what some people might call accident-prone. Things happen to you, for no obvious reason."

"Don't I know it," Fred sighed.

"But there is really no such thing as an 'accident-prone' person. It's like this: Over a certain period of time there will occur a certain number of floods, fires, unwanted pregnancies, misunderstandings, automobile accidents, colds, famines, dog bites, poisonings, bee stings, busted flushes and attacks of acid indigestion. These things do not happen to everyone in the same amounts or to the same degree. Some people, for example, have never been in an automobile accident. This may be partly the result of their driving skill; mostly it is simply a matter of statistical variations. Other people get into automobile accidents all the time, and this has very little to do with their ability to operate the machinery.

"Now, you might think that over a certain period of time everything would even out. For example, most people believe that if you flip a coin a thousand times, it should come up heads five hundred times and tails five hundred times. The key word here is 'should'. It *should* happen that way, but that is not to say that it *will*. The idea that things will even out eventually is based on a fallacy which we call the 'maturity of the chances' hypothesis. In the case of the coin flips, for example, there is no reason why it couldn't show heads more often than tails. In fact, it's entirely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possible it will come up heads a thousand times in a row, since each flip is independent of the next one. Do you follow me so far?"

"I think so," Fred replied.

"All right," he continued, warming to his subject. "There is another aspect of the situation that is important in your case. Let's go back to the coin flips. You might be willing to admit that the coin could come up heads a thousand times in a row if you kept flipping it forever. The natural assumption here is that the thousand heads in a row will occur only after millions of flips which alternate more reasonably between heads and tails. This is also a fallacy. You could start flipping a coin right now and get your thousand heads immediately.

"Here is a more vivid example: If you sit a bunch of monkeys down at a bunch of typewriters and let them peck away forever, sooner or later they will reproduce the world's great fiction. All possible random combinations of letters and spaces are equally possible, have equal odds against them, and that includes everything from total gibberish to *War and Peace*. So there is absolutely no reason why the monkeys shouldn't start right out with *Catch-22* and proceed to reproduce *The Holy Bible*. The odds against that happening are astronomical, to say the least, but so are the odds against *any* particular combination of letters and spaces."

"Holy shit!" exclaimed Fred.

"So, you see," Bertrand said, smiling, "you are the coin that comes up heads a thousand times in a row; you are the monkey that starts right out with *Catch-22*. All the major and minor disasters that can occur are happening to you all at once. A gambler might say you were on a losing streak."

Fred was completely dumbfounded. He sat and stared at the Lieutenant for a moment, then croaked, "But what about Dr. Hornbuckle? He said I was crazy!"

Bertrand shrugged. "That makes sense. You were unlucky enough to stumble upon the most incompetent psychiatrist in the State of New York."

"But what can I do about it?" Fred asked miserably. "There must be some way I can change my luck."

"Nope," said Bertrand. "As it turns out, Hornbuckle was right about one thing. There's nothing you can do. You have to roll with the punches. Your losing streak could end at any time. As a matter of fact, the odds are overwhelmingly in favor of that happening."

"They are?" Fred asked hopefully.

"Of course. Your whole life has been one long shot after another. The odds have always been in your favor. Just because you've had bad luck up to now doesn't mean it will continue. Each disaster has no consciousness of all the others."

"That's wonderful!" Fred cried.

"But," Bertrand cautioned, "you should keep in mind that just because your luck should change doesn't mean that it will. It should, but it might not. In any case, each moment is independent of the next and each day is the first day of the rest of your life. You must have faith in the future."

With these profound words ringing in his ears, Fred rose and thanked Lieutenant Bertrand profusely and headed for the door. His hand was on the knob when Bertrand's voice brought him to a halt.

"By the way," he said absently, "there's something else you should keep in mind. Even though your losing streak could stop at any time, it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could just as easily start up again. Anything's possible."

But Fred hardly heard these last words. He now had Faith In The Future. As a gesture of this faith he stopped at a drugstore on his way home and bought a Lottery ticket. All the way home he whistled happily and only tripped over his own feet three times.

THE NEXT DAY Fred Walker opened his morning paper and discovered he had won the New York State Lottery. The amount of his prize was fifty thousand dollars.

In the center of page one of the same newspaper was a photograph of a man to whom Fred bore a remarkable resemblance. The accompanying story said the man's name was Fred Walker and that he had been arrested by the FBI and charged with violation of the Official Secrets Act.

Fred's mailbox that day contained a letter from the City Attorney. The letter stated that a terrible mistake had been made by the city's police computer and that all of Fred's parking tickets had been cancelled and the warrants for his arrest voided. The City Attorney apologized profusely for the inconvenience.

As if all that wasn't enough, Fred received a phone call from Mona Witherspoon, who said she was visiting relatives in town and was still single and remembered him fondly and wanted to get together to talk over old times. He hadn't seen her in ten years.

These events occured one after the other and left Fred Walker sitting in his one-room apartment in a state approaching catatonia. It was many long minutes before the significance of what had happened began to sink in.

His losing streak was at an end, just as Lieutenant Bertrand had predicted. He was free at last; free from the deluge of fires, flat tires, wrong numbers, lost loves, mistaken identities and parking violations. He was free to fall in love, hold down a respectable job, make his way in the world as a normal human being.

And that wasn't all. It was apparent that his losing streak had not only ended, but that it had been transformed into a winning streak. His bank account had expanded from three dollars and forty-seven cents to fifty thousand dollars. He had a date with Mona Witherspoon.

His first act upon regaining the use of his limbs was to take his now worthless card file downstairs to the trash bin and dump the whole thing in with the old shoes, newspapers, broken dishes, steak bones, egg shells and other miscellaneous garbage. On his way back from completing this task he found a five dollar bill on the ground.

FRED WALKER collected his Lottery winnings and set out on a search for Judy, the girl he had met at Dr. Hornbuckle's office. If his losing streak had ended, so could hers, and he wanted to tell her about it. The psychiatrist's office was his first stop, but he found the door locked. The real estate agent next door informed him that Hornbuckle's license had been lifted.

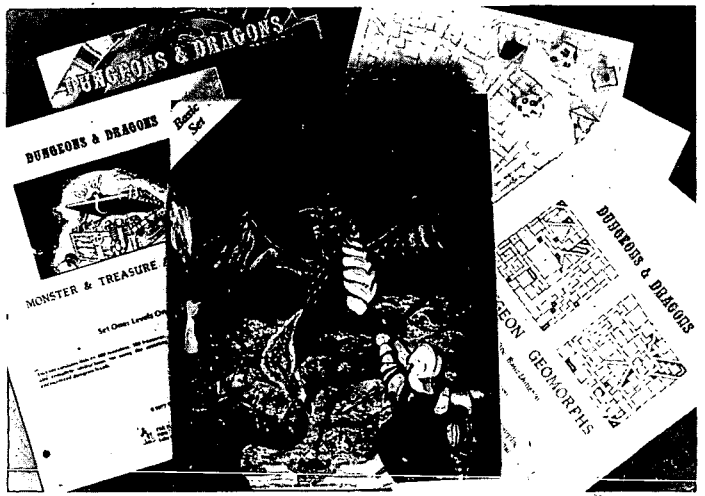
He stood in front of the office building and considered his problem. He had somehow stumbled upon Judy once, in spite of his previous bad luck; surely it could happen a second time, assuming the Arabs hadn't killed her. And this time he had his winning streak going for him.

He would do it. He could do any-

(cont. on page 105)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SLAIN ANY WICKED DRAGONS LATELY?



IT IS EASIER THAN EVER NOW WITH THE NEW BASIC SET . . .
A COMPLETE **SWORDS & SORCERY** ROLE PLAYING GAME
FOR 3 OR MORE ADULT PLAYERS . . . THE **NEW**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*

* T.M. REG. APP. FOR

At only **$9.95** plus $1.00 postage and handling fee.

Adventure into the world of the strange and fantastic, where magic works, and danger abounds. The new "Basic Set" of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS contains complete, carefully edited rules for beginning the campaign, a set of DUNGEON GEOMORPHS for easy preparation of a multi-level playing labyrinth, MONSTER & TREASURE ASSORTMENTS for stocking the dungeons, and a set of 5 polyhedra dice for random number generation - a complete package in a full color box. Get your copy today, and learn how exciting gaming can really be!

TSR HOBBIES, INC.
Dept. F
P.O.B. 756
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

AVAILABLE AT BETTER HOBBY AND BOOK STORES EVERYWHERE, OR DIRECT:

To order send check or money order to:
TSR HOBBIES, INC., DEPT. F
P.O.B. 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

☐	**BASIC SET**, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS - Swords & Sorcery role playing game.	$9.95 + 1.00
☐	**THE DRAGON**- Six issue subscription to the magazine of fantasy gaming and fiction.	$9.00
☐	**COMPLETE CATALOG**- Games, rules, miniatures, accessories.	$2.00

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip ____
Overseas: Send for address of local distributor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Bischoff appeared here last issue with "Top Hat"; this issue he turns to a very different topic—that of a writer with an unusual problem . . .

IN MEDIAS RES

DAVID F. BISCHOFF

Illustrated by Dan Steffan

I'M A MIDDLE MAN.

In medias res.

I remember in Freshman English at University, when we studied John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, my professor mentioned that the blind poet had used this device to begin his verse epic, opening the poem with the ousted Satan plummetting from Heaven Hellwards, streaming a great comet-tail of fire, sizzling through clouds, the outline of God's boot quite plain on his rear end.

In medias res.

Latin.

Starting at the middle.

It's a device used often these days. You get into the action, and *then* explain all the boring circumstances in which the action is being performed.

A common sort of narrative hook.

I remember all this quite well, here in my middle age.

2) I WAKE UP in the middle of the morning.

My wife is tugging me out of sleep.

"Phone, dear."

I wipe the covers off myself, groggily trudge to the hall where the phone hangs.

"Yes?"

"Jason Stein?"

"Yes."

"This is Fred Messieur. I believe I met you once at an Author's Guild party in New York."

"I remember that quite well, Mr. Messieur," I say. "I'm quite a fan of your work."

"Really? How nice to hear that. Can you fit a book of mine into your schedule?" His voice has a keen edge to it—he is slightly embarrassed to approach me, yet is obviously desperate. The situation is nothing new to me.

"You have a difficult style to imitate, Mr. Messieur."

"I've seen your chameleon work, Mr. Stein. I think you can do it."

"It would be a great pleasure if I can."

"You'll give it a try, then?"

"You know my rates?"

"Five cents a word advance, against the appropriate percentage of royalties."

"That's correct."

"In return, you promise discretion."

"Of course, Mr. Messieur." I drag the receiver into the next room, which serves as my study, to check my calendar. "How many words do you need? If it's under twenty thousand, I can fit you in two weeks from today—and have it to you no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

later than three weeks from today."

"Excellent! It's actually about eighteen thousand I need. Geez, you're fast!"

"Yes."

"Uh—I want you to know that this is not the result of a writer's block. And I'm not burned out. I don't care what some of the critics are saying, I'm as good as ever. I've got a hundred and fifty pages of my masterpiece done, and I can't do the middle. I know *exactly* what happens in the end. The climax is worked out in my head almost word for word. It's just the damned middle I—"

"No need to explain, Mr. Messieur. I understand. That's my specialty."

"I have your address. I'll bring it over next Friday."

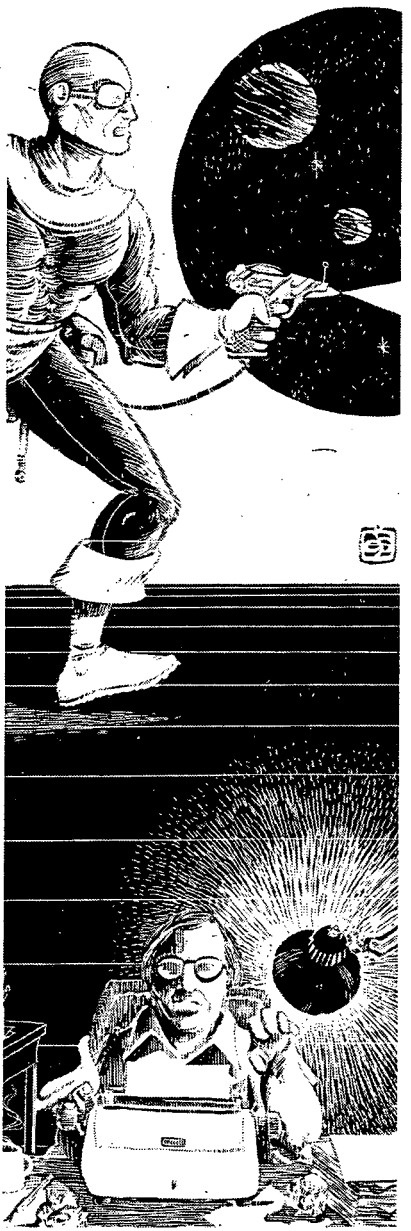
"Not necessary. Just mail it. You'll get a written version of our agreement, which you must sign, in the return mail, and the middle of your book no later than three weeks from now."

"Hey—listen, Stein, I really appreciate this. God, if not for you, I don't know *what* I'd do. My agent's on my back. The book is late. I know I can write the end, but it's just the damned middle that's got me stuck."

"No need for thanks, Mr. Messieur. It's the one thing I do well." I close with my standard joke. "Maybe one day you can write a beginning and an end for a book *I* do."

"Yeah." He chuckles. "Thanks. I'll send the book off right away, along with a summary of the end."

"Good day, Mr. Messieur."



3) I'VE HEARD of people who remember the pre-natal period of their life, the warm half-life before birth, inside Mother.

I don't.

I don't remember much at all about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my childhood, even. What memories I do have of that period are fairly blurred, as though I saw them in a vaguely remembered movie.

I know I hardly thought of myself as an individual; I viewed my life then only in relation to my mother and father, the two Gods of my particular pantheon.

When it gradually came to be that I realized that just like anyone else I was a separate entity, it seemed as though I was a performer in some interminable play that I had arrived late for, and for which I had no script.

I had to improvise, scared out of my mind, longing for the descent of the curtain, and yet dreading that occurrence above all others. And there was also the knowledge that a lowering of the curtain might not necessarily mean the end.

And so it's been for this slightly overweight, slightly balding, slightly bemused person living day to day, trying to beat a comfortable path into the future, trying to make sense of the path he's beaten to the present.

My past is like the sky at night. There are a few star-like, tiny glimpses into brightness, but the rest is a black curtain.

I've often wondered about the real sky: are the stars pinpricks in the overlay of nothingness; or are they merely ornaments hanging there—decorations without a Christmas tree?

4) MY WIFE, a good, loving woman, makes me a late breakfast, as usual.

I am my normal crumpled self as I sit down before it, the half-read morning paper tossed onto a kitchen chair, the crossword puzzle incomplete.

She sits down across the table from me with a steaming cup of coffee, and natters a while about the kids while I stuff my face with soft-boiled eggs, bacon, and cereal, in no particular order.

"What are you doing today, Jase?" she finally asks, after I hear the picaresque adventures of the little Steins at school, at home, at play.

"Well, Ellen," I say, mock-dramatically. "Today I've got to churn out the middle of a hack science fiction novel."

"For who?"

"Guy named Fraser. An editor. He's got a new line of SF adventure novels. Four a month. Likes my work. So, I do the middle of a book for him every month, and he gets someone else to do the beginning and end."

"Much money?"

"Enough—and I can do these sort of things *fast*. I don't even have to think about what I'm writing. I'll do it all this afternoon."

And so much for business discussion. Onward into PTA, Women's Society, the state of the world as of the morning's headlines, etc. At eleven I end the conversation with the traditional kiss on her cheek. "Gotta swing the pick in the salt mines, luv."

"Steak for dinner, Jason."

"Fine."

5) MIDDLE.

Midst. Mean. Medium.

Center, core, hub, kernal, umbilicus, nave, nucleus, axis.

Etcetera.

Implication: A beginning; an end.

Conclusion: You tell me.

6) JAKE HAWKINS lurched down the spaceship's hallway, his power gun thrust out before him, gripped tightly.

I've got to stop them, he thought. I've got no choice.

The meaning, the importance, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

truth of the thought pounded in his brain as fiercely as his heart thudded in his chest. He knew that any weakness now in his courage would spell the destruction of Earth's principal outpost in the war against the Morgali.

Skidding around a corner, he caught sight of an alien. The bright green of its uniform indicated it was merely a drone. Nevertheless, drones were reasonably dangerous. Not giving it a chance to turn around, he aimed his gun, pressed its firing stud. A lance of crimson and yellow spurted out, sliced through the ragged lines of the thing's bristled head. Blue and gray ichors exploded against the ceiling and walls of the corridor. The Morgali gave no outcry. It threw up its tentacles, which spasmed into the air. Then, as though it were a delicate flower just exposed to the overwhelming rays of a fierce sun, it wilted to the floor.

Hawkins gingerly stepped over the quivering, noxious mass of alien flesh and proceeded on his journey to the powercore of the alien craft with thoughts of Andrea, whom the Morgali had captured, drifting in his fevered mind.

7) I HAVE this insane dream quite often:

I am sitting in a classroom which is infinite. The desks and the students stetch on and on, over the horizon.

There is a line of speakers waiting their turn at the podium to address the audience.

Each one, once they individually face the crowd, expounds at length on a particular philosophy.

I listen attentively to each one, weighing what is said as fairly as I can in my mind. I take notes in a large, scribble-ridden notebook. Some of the speakers I agree with more than others. My own personal philosophy leans more and more toward Christian existentialism but I keep that to the rear of my mind to allow each speaker his turn.

Finally, they have all had their say.

I realize that I have been sitting at this desk for a long time. I look around me, and I realize that most of my fellow students have not even been listening to the presentations.

Some have built houses out of their desks. Some are making love, some are eating, some are fighting with one another.

The moderator of the session hops onto the stage, and goes to the mike.

"There is one more speaker," he announces.

I wonder which philosophy the new speaker represents. I had thought every philosophy of man already presented.

I sit in rapt attention, expectant of the speaker's arrival.

I wait. An hour passes. Another. I wait forever. No one walks to the podium.

I wonder if perhaps the moderator has made a mistake.

Meanwhile, a typewriter suddenly appears on my desk. I employ myself, I mark time, by writing stories on it. But I can't write beginnings. I can't write ends. Only middles.

Suddenly, from the corner of my eye, I see the moderator ascending the platform. I stop typing, and gaze attentively up at the man.

"Thank you, " he says. "I think the audience will have to agree that those past remarks have been quite eloquent." He looks sidelong, winks at empty air as though there were a person beside him.

My neighbor has started a garden by his desk, in which he is planting radish seeds.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8) I PAUSE for a sip of coffee, which I drink black when I'm writing.

I glance over the twelve pages my typewriter and I have written in the last hour. It is now 12Noon. At this rate, I will be finished with my portion of the book at 6 PM. I shall have time to catch up on some personal correspondence.

This is quite easy writing.

My IBM helps a lot, but most of the writing is mine. I set a pace, begin flowing with the prose, and at moments of hesitation, indecision, it supplies the logical following sentence in the style and context I have initiated.

I am one of the first writers to have taken advantage of this new service from IBM computer-connected machines.

At the spur of the moment, I have the desire to converse with the machine. I slide in a yellow, blank piece of paper (generally I always type on white 20 lb. bond, first draft final copy) tap out the communication code, the date, my extension number.

HOW YA DOING? I type.

FINE, it answers.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY PRESENT OPUS.

O, PUS.

HA HA. VERY CLEVER. COMPUTER, I'VE GOT A QUESTION.

QUEST ON.

YOU'RE TOO SMART FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. ACTUALLY, I HAVE FOUR QUESTIONS:

1/ WHO AM I?

2/ WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

3/ WHY CAN I ONLY WRITE MIDDLES?

4/ WHY CAN'T I WRITE BEGINNINGS AND ENDS?

ANSWERS:

1/ INSUFFICIENT DATA

2/ INSUFFICIENT DATA

3/ INSUFFICIENT DATA

4/ INSUFFICIENT FATA

THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF.

9) EVER SEE the picture?

It's a solid piece of rock, but clear rock. Amber.

In the middle of it, there's this fly. Scientists figure that fly has been in the middle of that rock for thousands of years.

Personally, I think it's always been in that rock.

10) I AM SEVENTY PAGES into my portion of the book, when I abrubtly stop. I don't feel much like continuing.

IBM rattles out a few more sentences, but it can't go on for long without my input factor.

The machine hums steadily a full minute, a smoothly functioning hum, then types out a question.

FURTHER INPUT? OR IS THIS SESSION FINISHED?

I swallow the dregs of my cold coffee. I better finish this. I'm booked up my ass—almost literally, come to think of it.

PLEASE RETYPE THIS PAGE, EXCLUDING OUR CONVERSATION.

AFFIRMATIVE—INSERT PAPER.

I roll a crisp sheet of paper onto the platen.

It begins to type the three paragraphs already written.

I watch the little ball spin and dance and zap the letters onto the paper a moment, then go to my record player and put on a classic rock album. When I return, the paragraphs are done, and the typewriter hums expectantly.

I sit down, and write the remaining fourteen pages to the mindless

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rhythms throbbing through the room.

11) AT 6:15, fifteen minutes late, I finish my eighty-four pages. I don't know how the thing ends, nor do I particularly want to. I have not titled it. The editor who employs me on it will see to that.

I turn off the IBM, gather the pages of the manuscript together into a neat pile, put them into a jiffy bag, address it to my editor, place stamps on it.

So much for that.

But there is a hollowness, a discernable *emptiness* in my gut.

I check my watch. It is 6:25.

I have done nothing today.

I have never done *anything*.

12) IT IS AS THOUGH this revelation has teetered many years above my head, like a rock on a cliff, and the composition of this particular piece of trash I have just completed was the final feather brushing against the revelatory rock, pushing it over and down on my head.

The weight is great. The torment terrible.

I feel devastated. For years, reams and reams of typewritten words have poured from my head to the printed page, and from there to scattered minds over the world. And none of the words have meant anything to me.

Words. Envelopes for meaning.

Language. Man's most powerful method of communication.

Word whore: me.

A language lady of the evening. The publishers, editors, and writers pay me, and I spread the legs of my talent, moan and laugh, weep for Hecuba, resound with my sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

Marlowe has finally found me in the depths of my personal Congo, my heart of darkness; found this particular Kurtz a cannibal of his own soul.

The horror. The horror.

I try to grasp for support. The morning mail has not been attended to—I slit open a letter, read it.

> Dear Jase,
>
> Thanks again for the great job on the middle of *Death Sky*. The publisher has just released it with some socko promotion, and it looks like a best-seller. You ought to be getting some decent royalty payments, soon. Meantime, I thought you might like to take a gander at an interesting review of the book.
>
> All best,
> Tom Marshall

Paper-clipped to the letter is a Xerox from *Publisher's Weekly*, containing a capsule review of *Death Sky*. I read it, and am pleasantly surprised.

I decide to try it on IBM. I slip in a sheet of scratch paper, turn on the machine, type:

HEY. LOOK AT THIS.

DEATH SKY, A NOVEL BY THOMAS MARSHALL

ENTERING THE ACTION/SUSPENSE SWEEPSTAKES, OLD HAND THOMAS MARSHALL DETAILS THE CURIOUS STORY OF THE HIJACKING OF AN INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION BY A GROUP OF POLITICAL MALCONTENTS. THE BEGINNING AND END ARE FAIRLY PEDESTRIAN; THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN FOUND IN A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL OF TWENTY YEARS AGO. BUT THE MIDDLE, WHICH AT FIRST GLANCE MERELY KILLS TIME BETWEEN THE SETTING UP OF THE SITUATION AND THE ACTION-FILLED CLIMAX, IS USED IN A FASCINATING CHARACTER STUDY OF THE ASSEMBLED GROUP IN THE CAPTURED SPACE STATION, WITH SOME SURPRISING PHILOSOPHICAL IN-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SIGHTS INTO THE NATURE OF HUMANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD.

The IBM hums a full five seconds, then types:

THIS NOVEL, *DEATH SKY*, IS NOT IN OUR SERVICE FILES.

I DID IT JUST BEFORE I TOOK YOU ON.

Another pause. Then:

CONCERNING YOUR PREVIOUS STATED PROBLEM—BASED ON OBSERVATIONS OF LITERATURE IN MY BANKS, I HAVE FORMED A PROVERB OF MY OWN THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO YOU:

'BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS ARE MYTHS—IN THE MIDDLE IS LIFE.'

And, of its own accord, it shuts off.

13) My wife knocks at the door. Dinner time. I respond without enthusiasm. Inside, I am ill. The world is a gray, lacklustre affair, I think, as I glumly mope down to the ritual Stein evening trough, to suck up the slop necessary to fuel this sound and fury inside me that powers my 'career'.

The children are full of their usual antics and stupidities. The wife is blissfully homebodying about, situating the tableware just so, prattling on about the usual nonsense.

The meal is tasteless.

Later, I watch television with the kids. I count ten people violently shot to bits in two blood-thirsty action shows. The children sit numbed with fascination, their little fingers itching for triggers to pull.

Oh God, I think. Pull them on me. Pull them on me and scatter these wasted brains like spilled scrambled eggs.

There is nothing for it but to trudge back to the study, code in the IBM, and try to start a story.

After fifteen minutes of staring at the keyboard, trying to mix together these twenty six letters into a beginning, I realize that this is no good. Resisting the urge to do something insane like throw my IBM out the window, I simply lift it up, move it down to the floor, place the dust cover on it carefully.

I go to the closet, take out my old Smith-Carona typewriter, situate it on the desk, make myself comfortable, and stare at the keys of this machine. A manual yet! It is hard, very hard to work on, as I type out 'All good men must come to the service of their country' several times, in various obscene permutations.

Enough. The story. I yank out the practice sheet, insert fresh paper.

I begin to sweat the bloody words off the tips of my cold fingers. After a page, I realize that it's not right. I try again. And again. My back begins to hurt. My hands ache, unaccustomed as they are to the stiff keys of the manual. The letters clack obstinately onto the paper, reluctantly group into words, sentences and paragraphs.

Oh God, I feel like Christ nailed to a typewriter.

Father, why hast thou forsaken me?

Forgive *me* for I know not what I have done.

My wife knows enough not to disturb me. I bang and clank through the evening, past midnight. Two pages, two and a half, three pages. My hands are black from fixing the carbon ribbon. Dark smudges abound over everything.

At three thirty AM I finish the story.

It is fifteen pages long.

It has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

And . . . And I think it's not bad.

I stare at the pages neatly piled together atop my desk, glance over the

(cont. on page 105)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editorial (cont. from page 4)
sideration the size in which it will be reproduced. If you work with lots of fine detail, don't work too large or reduction will drop out much of your detail work or blacken it up. If you're in doubt, try having your piece statted down to final reproduction size and see how it looks. Generally reduction will tighten up one's work without losing detail if you're working in the proper range of sizes. *Don't* send us a same-size stat (or original) for use in the magazine; it won't look nearly as clean or sharp as a larger piece which has been reduced by our printer. Most artists work for a reduction of 25% to 50%, with variations according to individual style and temperament.

6. We're quite indifferent to the medium you use for color work; we're concerned only with the final product and how it looks. If it looks good I don't care if your original was done on a paper towel with magic markers. (On the other hand, remember what I said about sending originals through the mail; this applies doubly to originals done in a fragile medium or vulnerable to water damage or the like.)

7. . . "Any other questions that I have not covered. . ." That's a bit tricky, but I know what you mean, and there's a big one which didn't occur to you: Where must the artist be located?

On cover art it really doesn't matter. But where our interiors are concerned the short deadlines demand of us that we work with artists located either near the Publisher (New York City area) or me (the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area). Artists who live near me receive their assignments directly from me, and are given the original manuscript to read. (I prefer not to trust the mails with the only copy of the manuscript which I have; and, no, it is not feasible—on my budget—to have more copies made. . .) Artists who live in the NYC area receive a set of page-proofs of the story from the publisher with a blank space where their art is to go. This not only tells them whether the illustration is to be half or full-page, but shows them the layout into which it will fit. These artists usually receive a relatively short deadline as well.

Artists who live in other parts of the country—and I note Tom lives in Wisconsin—are out of luck as far as interior b-&-w assignments go, I regret to say. We have been forced to turn down a number of talented artists for this reason, and no one regrets this more than I. Unfortunately, the logistics of the situation are unarguable.

What else? We buy only first-use on art—another reason to send us an appropriate copy rather than the original—leaving the artist all other rights: book rights, reprint rights, and the right to sell or otherwise dispose of the original as he sees fit. (Good original art now brings a handsome price at the better science fiction conventions.)

If this all sounds a bit discouraging, please don't let it get you down. Nearly all the artists who appear here and in our companion magazine, AMAZING SF, started out as fans who sent us samples of their work and followed the same process outlined above into professional publication. If you have talent, you can do the same. (And if you don't live in either the NYC area or the DC area, don't give up—try the other magazines, some of which have no problem in dealing with artists by mail.)

Finally, let me caution beginning artists: I see a lot of samples from young artists which are essentially school notebook jottings, usually of thick-thewed barbarians slashing with their swords or grabbing nearly naked temptresses. Try to avoid these cliches. Show me how you can handle both people and scenes, and if you're pressed for ideas, try one of the stories we've published and show me how *you* would have illustrated it. That will give me a far better idea of your capabilities than a series of poses that look as if they'd been lifted from *Conan* comics.

—TED WHITE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

Milhaus is back—with a new novella about Willis Baxter and his demonic darling, Anathae. In previous stories we saw Willis summon her up (to his considerable surprise) and change his life, seemingly for the better. Now Milhaus explores the darker side of their relationship as Baxter learns to live with a woman who is at once an innocent nymphette in appearance and a thousands-year-old demon . . .

MICHAEL F.X. MILHAUS

Illustrated by Richard Olsen

STRANGE are the ways of coincidence.

Right now there are only five people in O'Leary's Bar & Grill, just off campus from old Powhattan University—although this is roughly average for 4 p.m. (There will be more people along momentarily, although none of them need concern us here.)

That's Mike Schultz, the bartender, over there behind the bar—he serves drinks rather than a significant purpose in this tale. He wipes the bar, and the glasses after they've been washed—sometimes, absent mindedly, with the same rag—and sometimes has a word or two with his regulars. Still, someone has to do the manual work.

At the moment Mike is serving a sweet Manhattan straight up to a drunken dentist, one Dr. Henderson by name, in the darkest corner of the bar. The dentist usually prefers daiquiris, but today his favorite patient—a lovely secretary who works over at old P.U.—did not show up for her appointment; he is certain he is in love with her, just as certain that he could never win her, and in his drinking is trying to lose the certainty of his marriage to someone else. Part of the problem is that this secretary has nearly perfect teeth—and though he provides the service to her free, he cannot convince her to come in every month to have her teeth cleaned. So he sits here and, with the aid of alcohol, fantasizes about filling her cavity.

He, also, has nothing to do with *this* tale. Strange are the ways of coincidence.

But the other three . . .

Ah, the other three, indeed! Two of them are in the bar drinking together, and they are already known to us, from old acquaintance in tales that would not be forgot were your evermore-humble Author not deprived of his footnotes. At any rate, they are Professor Willis Baxter and Professor Larry Hawthorne.

The third, one John Smith by name, sits two stools down from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them, a shadow on the edge of their perception, noticed but unheeded, a faceless face.

Let us join them now and see if they, in any combination whatsoever, have anything at all to do with this tale . . .

"I ABSOLUTELY forbade her to crawl 'round in my brain!" Willis muttered. He upended his Dewers, then slammed the glass down onto the bar with a *clack*. "She's a doer, Larry. She does what she wants."

Hawthorne shook his head sympathetically. He glanced sidelong at the man sitting down the bar from himself and Willis; the man sipped his beer and seemed oblivious to Willis' mumblings. Most people don't listen to other people's conversations in bars, and Hawthorne did his best to shake off the feeling that the man was listening intently to their conversation.

Hawthorne put off replying for the moment, choosing instead to sip at his rum and coke. Two men came in and found themselves a place over near Dr. Henderson. Mike Schultz went over and took their drink order (a Heinekens and a draft Michelob); two girls—obviously, by their books, from Powhattan—came in and found themselves a table, and he took their order (a Pink Squirrel and a Caluha & creme) before going back behind the bar again.

"So how," Hawthorne asked at length, "do you know she's been in your brain?" He leaned a large elbow on the counter and stared past Willis toward the girls. When one of them—Hawthorne was certain he knew her—leaned over to adjust her shoe, she exposed mountainous curves at the neck of her low-cut blouse. One of the two men walked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over to the two girls' table and said something; one of the girls said something sharp back. Schultz looked up from mixing drinks, put his hand on the shillelagh behind the bar, but the man laughed and walked back to his own table. (It should be noted, in fairness to O'Leary's, that it did not cater to a rough trade, but that Schultz—as bartender and bouncer (someone had to do the manual work)—was prepared for trouble if it should arise.)

Willis, oblivious to everything but his own problem of the moment, flagged Schultz behind the bar. " 'nother Scotch, Mike—an' don't thin it down with so much ice. It isn't right to mess with God's Water." And then, for the third time, he said to Hawthorne, *"In vino, veritas;* in Scotch, oblivion."

Schultz, a balding man of fifty-one with permanent smile lines at his mouth and eyes, halted in front of Willis, two mixed drinks and two beers on the platter he was carrying; he glanced briefly at Hawthorne, then asked, "How many have you had now, Professor Baxter? Six or seven, isn't it?"

"She'd zap you," Willis said to Hawthorne, not really having heard the bartender's questions. "Don't fight my own battles—that's how come I'm a blasted eunuch."

Schultz's eyes narrowed a little but he went on, "As I count, you've had about six, Professor, maybe seven. I'm sorry, but I can't serve you anything but coffee now. Wait a couple of hours and—"

Willis' eyes seemed to focus on Schultz for the first time. "What d'ya mean by that? I'm a respectable citizen. I wanna talk to the manager—no, the *owner*—of this joint. I wanna talk to O'Leary himself!"

"Now, Willis—" Hawthorne looked around nervously. The man he'd thought had been listening to them was staring at Willis, but looked away when he caught Hawthorne's glance.

Schultz pulled himself up to his full five feet nine inches. "I own O'Leary's, Professor. Have since 1954, when I bought it from Luigi Monticollo."

Willis' mood changed abruptly. "Really? And you still tend bar yourself?"

Schultz's smile matched Willis' abrupt change. "The way I figure it," he said, "someone has to do the manual work. Now, do you have something to say to me, as the owner, that you wouldn't say to me as just the bartender?"

Hawthorne laid his large hand on Willis' shoulder. "He's got nothing to say, Mike. Give him a while to sober up, okay?"

"And a cup of coffee to help me do it," Willis added.

Mike Schultz winked, said, "You've got it," then moved down the bar and out to the two tables to serve the drinks he held.

Hawthorne waited a moment, then turned back to Willis. "Now tell me what's bothering you, Will. You got problems with Anathae? How could you have problems with such a sexy little girl? With her magic, you could have anything you—"

Willis reached up deliberately and pulled Hawthorne's hand from his shoulder. "You put your finger on it, Larry—she's a *little girl*—a couple of thousand years old, since she's a demon, true, but to all appearances a very young human girl, just the same. I've been—she's been—*we've* been making love since I first conjured her up, just about—so what does that make me, some kind of *pre*vert?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Willis brought himself up short. He realized he was on the verge of talking about a subject which, had he not been so drunk, would have been acutely embarrassing. (Strictly speaking, of course, "drunk" was too simple a description of Professor Willis Baxter; in truth, no single word could truly serve to describe his condition at this point—"four sheets to the wind" being about as close as a short summation as one might assay.)

Virility—particularly a lack thereof—is a touchy subject; one does not easily confide in another, particularly in another male, when one has problems of potency. Yet it was true that Willis was suffering from such a problem: Anathae's youthful appearance—that of a saucy fourteen-year-old—which had once seemed almost enticing to him, was now among the factors which helped turn him off so that after years of hopeful and ready abstinance, in the crush of plenty supplied by his beautiful and willing roommate, his key had suddenly grown too limp to fit the lock. If Anathae, who could read his mind until he forbade it for the duration ("I *know* you could fix it with magic, Ana—but I've got to rise to the occasion *myself*, don't you see?"), could not understand him, how could he expect Hawthorne to?

Mike Schutlz arrived at this point with a steaming black coffee for Willis. Willis' eyes narrowed as he considered the steam and whether or not Anathae had obeyed his wishes: Did she know the trembling fear he felt when he considered their relationship? Did she know how unsure, inept, bungling and, therefore, unworthy he felt when he approached their bed, or how her youthful appearance was affecting him? He did not know.

Hawthorne, only one drink behind Willis, had lost the thread of the conversation; he had been trying to catch the eye of one of the Powhattan girls but had not been successful. He realized that Willis had been talking about Anathae, and mentioning that she was a demon. Hawthorne glanced around furtively, but no one seemed to be taking any note of Willis' complaints—no one, that is, except the man two barstools down, and even he did not seem over-curious.

Ah, Dear Reader, if only Professor Larry Hawthorne, head of Student Impetus, and Professor Willis Baxter, head of the Arts & Sciences Division at old Pow-How, had but known! And yet, if they could have known the identity of that young man of thirty on the bar stool, if they had known that this thin young man was John Smith—or, as he was known by mail-order diploma, the Reverand John Smith—how could they have guessed what was in his mind? How could Willis, in particular, guess how this man would fit into his future?

How, indeed?

But you and I, Dear Reader, are in a special position—we know, herewith, that Rev. John Smith is the founder of the Receivers of the Lord, a group comprised largely of students over at Powhattan. We know that the group has funneled a certain amount of funds to Smith—not quite as much, perhaps, as he had acquired when he walked off with the organ fund of that congregation down in Dothan, Alabama, nor near again as much as he had once made from selling the same piece of real estate to half a dozen people—but still enough to live on. Not in the style to which he and the rest of us would love to become accustomed, perhaps, but still enough to get by—bread and beans, an occa-

DIGITIZED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sional hamburger and, even less frequently, a beer.

Rev. John Smith, as always, is looking for an edge. He would be the first to admit that his group, RotL, needs new impetus—and that certainly no new member would be likely to join if everything remained at its present low ebb. Reverend Smith is not dumb—he would have been in jail several times over if that were the case—but he has a tendancy not to follow-through on his thinking, which limits his operations to the 'small con'.

Smith, a little down-in-the-mouth over the turn of his fortunes, and certainly not willing to stay in the divinity business here if it should remain on the same keel, *had* been listening intently to the overweight man two stools up from him at O'Leary's and also to his companion. And it appeared to Smith that one of these men, university professors both—the one whose name was either Willis Baxter or Dexter (it was rather hard to overhear while pretending to be absorbed in drinking one's beer)—had, or was perhaps possessed by, a demon. There was, Smith felt sure, money to be obtained in this somewhere, somehow. And Smith needed very much to obtain that money—at present, he was down to (count them) two dollars and a beloved collection of baseball cards.

Demon? Magic? Smith smiled into his beer—as a former deprogrammer of religious nuts (which he had given up as too much like real work), he knew how easy it was to remove something from somewhere when it cannot possibly be there at all. Gods, devils, demons, spirits, ghosts, they were all the same—some people believed in them, and you could take advantage of that belief, but of course these supernatural things did not really exist. This, he realized, might well be the edge he had been looking for.

Willis contemplated, but did not touch, his coffee. He leaned his elbows on the bar and stared at himself in the mirror behind the bottles. His five-o'clock shadow had begun to sprout, and his unfashionably short brown hair hung in a diagonal fringe across his forehead.

Abruptly he said, "I think I better go."

"I'll drive you," Hawthorne said. "It's a couple of blocks out of my—"

"No thanks," Willis said loudly. Then, softly: "I need the walk to sober up some. The cold air and ever'thing—can't drink this coffee. Anyway, for all I know, Ana could be in my head—might reach out an', pop, whisk me home at any second."

"Willis—" Hawthorne frowned and tossed back his long black hair.

"Nope. nope. Won't listen to reason—'m goin' now." And with that, Professor Willis Baxter walked a circuitous path around the tables between himself and the door and, clutching his camelhair coat close about him, disappeared through the door of the bar.

Then Hawthorne heard a tenor voice from behind himself. "You think your friend will make it home all right?"

Hawthorne turned to face John Smith, who motioned with his glass toward the front door. "Just hope he doesn't get sick along the way. I couldn't help but notice—he was really belting them down."

Hawthorne smiled tolerantly. "He's developed quite a capacity and tolerance for liquor."

"And you?" Smith said evenly. "Have a drink with me—I hate to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drink alone."

Hawthorne glanced over at the table where the two Powhattan girls had been sitting, noticed that the second of the two men who had preceded them into the bar was talking to them; they giggled, the second man gestured to the first man who had elicited the sharp reaction from them, and then all four of them were sitting together.

"I only have half an hour to kill," he said.

"That's okay," Smith said. "If I could afford it, I'd treat—but I just like a good conversation. Listen, my name's John. Say, your friend seemed a little crazy—perhaps the drinking had something to do with it. He thinks he has a demon?"

Hawthorne ordered another rum & coke and moved onto the stool next to Smith's. He downed half the drink before he answered, "Doesn't just think it."

FORGET YOUR WOOLENS, Dear Reader? Then let us skip, forthwith, to Willis Baxter's apartment, escaping the chilly trudge from O'Leary's, thus:

Willis slammed the door so hard that the entire apartment shook. He glared at the girl-demon sprawled on his couch, threw down his briefcase and stalked into the kitchen.

During his long cold—but still not sobering—walk from O'Leary's, he had enumerated his troubles, listing them in the order of importance they held for him. They went something like this:

1. His inexplicible impotence with Anathae.
2. The ennui he felt about his now-year-old position as head of P.U's Arts & Sciences Division.
3. The opinion of numerous other people, including but not limited to his nosy neighbor, Miss Bradmorton, that he was screwing a minor.

"You lie around naked like that all day?" he half-snarled, half-slurred over his shoulder, reaching far into the refrigerator to retrieve a glass decanter of pre-mixed Martini. "Got nothin' else to do?"

The youthful-appearing demon on the couch sat up slowly and stretched, her long red hair falling back to reveal two small horns. This was Anathae; during the past year she had shared Willis' bed and board, his trials and tribulations, triumphs and victories—and, most recently, his two-month-long spate of impotence and ill-humor.

"What would you like for me to do, Will?" Anathae floated toward him on a cloud of sulphurous vapor; her dainty hooves barely brushed against the carpet as she stretched again, exposing bare upturned breasts. "Shall I make it spring in the middle of December? Shall I change the walls in Miss Bradmorton's apartment to glass? Shall I—"

"Anathae!" Willis snapped.

"Sorry," she said.

He took a gulp of Martini straight from the decanter. The alcohol he had consumed at O'Leary's had not provided him with quite enough warmth for the long trek through the snow; this new alcohol helped to thaw him out. He turned, looked at Anathae, shrugged apologetically, then walked past her into the living room.

"I'm sorry too," he said. "It's my Problem. And . . . oh, hell, it's just that things are so, well, *hum-drum*. Over at Powhattan. Ever since my plansh—'scuse me—my *plans* for a decent curriculum were realized, ever since my problems at the Department

ACCESSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were straightened out—"

Willis broke off, took another deep drink; he turned in time to see Anathae come out of the kicthen—fully clothed. Her long green dress brushed against him as she sat down on the couch.

"Do you mean to tell me," she asked, "after you've realized one of your life's ambitions—to head the Department—that you're bored?" She curled up against the arm of the couch so that her small hard breasts bulged appealing from her low-cut gown.

Willis sank into his purple easy chair and considered his Martini. "What kin I do? Sure, I'm top man—I'm top man there, an' all I do is push paper. I dunno. Somehow, I thought it would be—*different*. You know? I mean, I thought it would be *different*. Back when I was just a professor teaching there, I thought the problem with the people who were running things was jusht—pardon—jusht that they lacked, you know, imag*ina*tion. Now I unnerstan'. I see what it's like. Most the stuff I deal with's got nothin' to do with education. Water pipes bustin', Student Union activities, registration, makin' sure the student store's got enough erasers. *Nothin'* to do with education.

"And the memos. God! The memos! People coverin' their ass in paper. Yes, really—that's all it is. Nobody can do anything by word of mouth—gotta put it down in writing, in a memo, before you can get anything done, and *then* it's no guarantee. You can get twenty memos back for every one you put out." Willis' shoulders drooped and he covered his eyes—after setting his Martini on the table beside him—with one hand, loosened his tie with the other. "I don't have time to teach. Or learn. Or make love."

"I know," Anathae said—and regretted it immediately.

"Oh, goddammit!" Willis looked at Anathae venemously, then turned away, teeth clenched, to stare out the front window at the frozen lawn which stretched out to the street. Beyond that were more garden apartments identical in virtually every way to his own—identically landscaped with identical evergreen trees. "And they all live in little boxes, and they're all made out of tickey-tackey and they all look just the same," he muttered.

"What?" Anathae asked.

"My whole life's been at Powhattan," he said, ignoring her. "Every day I've walked those campush paths, eaten in the Student Union, worried about campush problems. And sometimes my own—and sometimes my own." He shook his head and sighed. "And next week I got to go to another stuffed shirt faculty party. I got the job, and I gotta do it. I just wonder, sometimes, how long I can go on like this."

Willis looked down at the tie in his hand; he vaguely remembered having untied it and having pulled it off. With a small disjointed flipping motion, he dropped it on the carpet. "There's a whole world out there, Ana! Isn't—'scuse me, please—isn't it mine, too? Or is it, y'know, like Thoreau said? That we all lead lives of quiet deshperation?"

Willis gestured toward the window, indicating all the world outside, then did a double-take as he saw a rather portly woman coming up the walk.

Gotta keep my voice down, he thought, smirking, *if I'm gonna lead a life of* quiet *desperation*. He put a finger to his lips, shushed himself, then started to search about on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

floor for the decanter, which he had put aside with his Martini.

Anathae stood up abruptly. "She's going to knock at our door," she said in a whisper.

Willis' elbow upended the decanter as he turned to Anathae. "Who is? What?"

"I read her thoughts," Anathae said, tracing a demonic symbol in the air. All at once she was dressed in a modest yellow suit and comfortable patent leather boots. Her hair was momentarily electrified, then reassembled itself into a neat bun at the back of her neck; only a few curls remained loose at the hairline to cover her small red horns.

Another gesture in Willis' direction and his decanter of Martinis—together with the resultant spill of Willis' accident—disappeared entirely.

"She's coming here because of me," Anathae said, trying to pull Willis into a sitting position. "Because of that nosy Miss Bradmorton, really, but never mind. Listen, you can't be drunk—she'll—"

The door bell sounded its three descending notes.

"Coming!" Anathae called brightly, then turned back to Willis. "Please, Will—this could be important. She mustn't know you've been drinking—she's from some county agency and she could cause us a lot of grief. Don't say anything. And don't breathe on her!"

"I won't say a word," Willis assured her. He smiled inanely and settled back in his chair, which (unfortunately) fell over.

"Baelzebub," Anathae muttered. She made another sign in Willis' direction, righting both Willis and the chair; then she turned and opened the door.

At the threshold stood a slightly plump woman of about 40 with curled grey hair, modest makeup, and a plumb-colored suit one size too small.

"Good afternoon," the woman said, holding out a gloved hand to Anathae. "I'm glad to find you at home—I'm Mrs. Hayward, Julia Hayward, of Social Services."

"Yes?"

Julia Hayward stretched her dark-painted lips into a smile and, inasmuch as Anathae was not really barring her way, stepped across the threshold into the apartment and glanced around. "Well," she said quickly, "a concerned citizen called our Department about your welfare—Ana? —yes, Ana. You seem older than I expected. Anyway, I'm certain you can understand one citizen's caring about the situation of other—this person felt you were not receiving, um, proper care. I believe you are the ward of Willis Baxter?"

"Yes—I was," Anathae said, casting Willis a secretive and threatening look, "until I came of age. My parents passed away quite some time ago. Professor Baxter is my cousin, twice removed."

"Your cousin," Mrs. Hayward said with a little nod. Turning to Willis, she said, "How do you do, Mr. Baxter?"

Willis looked up at her and smiled like a cat who had just raped a canary and was trying to conceal the fact.

"He's not feeling well," Anathae said, drawing Mrs. Hayward to a chair on the far side of the room. "He's been working very hard over at the University all day and he had to walk home in the cold—you can never find a cab when you need one, just like the police. I think he's coming down with swine flue. Or perhaps pneumonia."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Hayward stifled a gasp that came out as a choke, then hastily pulled a handkerchief out of her purse. A well-meaning woman, she nonetheless had a secret phobia—to wit, that she would catch some dreadful disease from one of the people she was assigned to help—a phobia which was never far from her thoughts.

But after only a slight pause, she continued bravely: "My! Well, let me get right to the point, then. Ana, my Department is responsible for minors who have problems. Some minors are in a position where they're too embarrassed to admit they have any problems—if you know what I mean?" She glanced at Willis, then gave Anathae a meaningful stare.

Willis looked at Mrs. Hayward, then at Anathae.

He smiled.

He chuckled softly.

He laughed.

He tried to stop. Uncontrollably, he began to giggle—some necessary part of his inhibition had given way and, despite dark glances from Anathae, he melted into helpless mirth.

"Awk!" he said as he suddenly found himself standing and then, again involuntarily, in a stiff-legged shuffle, walking out of the room.

Anathae smiled unevenly at Mrs. Hayward. "He gets nervous when he has diarrhea," Anathae said by way of explanation. "I think he *is* coming down with something . . .

"Now, what were we saying? Oh, yes—my welfare. Professor Baxter, I'm afraid, is the victim of some busybody—I'm sure you know the type. He doesn't share details of his life with his neighbors, and as a result I suppose they find it easy to misinterpret what's happening here. But for your information, technically I'm no longer his ward since I've come of age. I'm always getting carded in bars and suchlike, but I'm really quite a bit older than I look. I'm having no problems with Willis—he was kind enough to take me in when I needed it—and since we're related, I see nothing wrong with my keeping house and cooking for him."

"Now, my dear, I never said, never *hinted*, that there was anything 'wrong' with your relationship with Mr. Baxter—"

"*Professor* Baxter," Anathae corrected. "He's head of the Arts and Sciences Division of Powhattan University. You can check that out if you like. I assure you, if there is any question of his respectability—"

"No, no," Mrs. Hayward said. "you misunderstand. I never said there was anything wrong. This was just a report we had—which I am supposed to check out. Provided you're of age—"

Anathae began to cough. "Sorry, Mrs. Hayward, but neither Professor Baxter nor I took the innoculations when they were offered—I hope you're not going to catch anything from us."

She sneezed violently. "I have my birth—*achoo!*—excuse me—my birth certificate around here somewhere, if you don't mind waiting a few more minutes . . . "

Mrs. Hayward trembled, spreading her handkerchief over her mouth, as Anathae went to a nearby desk, opened a drawer, and pulled a birth certificate from it—Mrs. Hayward was too concerned with the germs she was certain she was being surrounded with to notice, and may not in any event have paid any attention to, the gesture Anathae had made at the desk.

Anathae coughed again, bringing the hand which held the certificate to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her mouth. As a result, Mrs. Hayward didn't bother to look at it—she knew it was not particularly logical, but she suddenly thought that she could *feel* tiny swine flu (or pneumonia?) germs crawling all over her.

Her resolve broke.

"No, everything seems to be fine here. I needn't check. I'm certain this is a false report. Besides, which, I am *terr*ibly susceptible to colds and things like that, and," she paused, raised her voice so that Willis could hear her in the other room, "*So nice to have met you, Professor Baxter!*", then continued to Anathae, "the symptoms for what the two of you have sound absolutely *dreadful!*"

Anathae nodded sympathetically and understandingly as Mrs. Hayward opened the door and let herself out.

Anathae walked to the window and watched as Mrs. Hayward started up a gold and black Opel and sped away at a velocity which exceeded that prescribed by law.

Willis returned to the room and Anathae turned to look at him.

"Again," he said, "with the magic. You saved my tail again—but what if I wanted to save it myself?"

Anathae sat wearily on the couch.

"Willis," she said, "if you won't talk sensibly—don't talk to me."

He started to reply, stopped, then nodded and made an effort to sober up. "Okay—what do you think caused all that?"

"Not 'what'—'*who*'. I already know. Our nosy neighbor, Miss Bradmorton, is the one who turned in that report. I know, Willis, because I've been inside her mind. She told Mrs. Hayward—anonymously, of course—that you were screwing a minor. But she didn't use such delicate terms."

"She could really louse me up with the University," Willis said, nodding glumly. "You don't happen to know if she—"

"Just a minute, we'll find out," Anathae said. She traced a rhomboid sign in the air, whispered a few gutteral words which Willis could not make out, and suddenly a holograммic vision glowed at the center of the room—it was Henrietta Bradmorton herself! She stood staring as if she could not really see where she was, as though she were in some dark, unfamiliar place, and therefore afraid to move lest she trip over some unseen object.

"No," Anathae said after a while, "she hasn't done anything about reporting you to the University—not because she hasn't wanted to, but because she knows that she is the unknown quantity there. She thinks—and she's probably right—that people at the University would not believe her, and if they believed her wouldn't do anything. If she could find the handle to the brush, she'd love to smear you there—but she doesn't even know how to go about looking for the handle.

"Now, look at her, Will—really look at her." Anathae obviously had to concentrate to maintain the aparition. "See the frown lines that have deepened about her mouth? The careful tweezing and makeup do not hide the sadness about her eyes—she is like a study by Rodin. Not quite old—but no longer young, and coming to realize that older is the only thing she can get, the only way she can move through time.

"She's dyed her hair the same horrible brunette it was when she used to tease and deny men. How she would love to have a man—there are few she would deny now, but none are asking. They have learned. She'd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

love to go to parties all the time like she sees us doing, and she'd love to have a job like yours, Will—out in the morning and home at night. She's rather locked in to a telephone selling job that keeps her in her apartment all day. So she takes what entertainment she can."

"Like hanging out her door and tending our business," Willis said as he sank back down into his easy chair and looked away from Henrietta. He did not like what he chose to see as an accusing look in her eyes. Her presence, even in this form, seemed to say to him, *Aha, Willis Baxter! You child molester and closet pervert! Look at that girl—just look at her! She's young enough to be your daughter! You think you're doing her any kind of service by—*

"Get her out of here!" Willis said angrily. He shut his mind's ear against Henrietta's whining voice; he felt incredibly tired. "It's bad 'nuff she sends in anonymous complaints to Social Services—but every time I go out, just about, she's peering out at me like a bat out of a cave, and likely as not yelling somethin' 'bout *im*morality or dishgrace! Almost as bad as them religious fanatics that've been making such nuisances of themselves on campus."

Anathae waved a hand and the vision disappeared. She got up off the couch, sat down on the arm of Willis' chair, and put a hand lightly on his shoulder. "It seems I cause you a lot of trouble, Will."

"Maybe," Willis said tentatively, "it wouldn't hurt if you made yourself look a little older—"

But Anathae, whose eyes sparkled to the humor of some inner joke, did not really hear him. "If you want, I could *really* take care of her so that she'd never do anything like that again—"

"No, no," Willis said. "Not worth the trouble." He waved his hands distractedly, realizing that his chance to broach the subject had come and gone. "I jus' wonder where it'll all end," he mumbled. He leaned his head on one hand. "I'm still kind of drunk from all those drinks I drank—although I must be getting soberer or I couldn't have said that, could I? But anyway, I think what I'm going to do is, I'm going to turn in early."

Anathae sighed. "All right, Will," she said.

WITH A CAREFUL turn of the knob, so as not to disturb either the badly cracked window pane or any members of his congregation who might still be about, John Smith opened the door to his basement flat, a.k.a., the Holy Tabernacle of the Receivers of the Lord.

Because it served a dual purpose, it was not the sort of apartment that appeared to be lived in—the living room was filled with three rows of hard-backed chairs, all facing a mottled green divan near the door to the kitchen. There also was a john that worked often as not. The floor was basic grey cement; the walls were hung with pictures of large-eyed children staring up into hazy light and clasping their hands, and the rent was $35 a month.

And the people in this dim sanctified chamber?

They were none other than the cream of Powhattan's lost and lonely.

Consider, Dear Reader, Simon Balfour—a senior after five hard years of study, and a notable failure with women. But this could soon be a thing of the past—since his association with the Receivers of the Lord, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has been talked into taking a bath *at least* once a month whether he feels he needs it or not. He has also, on RotL advice, cached a number of gallons of Listerine under his dormitory bed, and has considered asking Susan Gates for a date.

And what of Susan Gates? Had she not, before her association with RotL, been terribly downcast? Indeed she had—with no group to belong to, or at least none that felt the obligation to make her feel at home, she had known the loneliness that only a young girl with glasses, pimples, and a size tenty-nine chest could know. Now she could walk right up to any stranger and start talking—and although it might be argued that it would be better if she could find some subject other than RotL to talk about, it is at least a step in the right direction.

And lastly, Dear Reader, consider Allan Bosnan. As his fellow students at Powhattan got to know him, they began to say that he wasn't bright enough to tie his shoe lace and chew gum. Eventually, however, the truth came out; Alan wasn't bright enough to tie his shoe lace *or* chew gum. Indeed, whenever he sat down to eat in the cafeteria, it was possible to get an even-money bet that he wouldn't remember to open his mouth. And yet, somehow, he has managed to survive to his junior year—no one, least of all his fellow students, really understands how. He is overlarge, his father is *moderately* well-to-do (and thus he finds himself to be the financial backbone, as it were, of RotL) although far from wealthy, and despite his stupidity he attempts—moreso than any of his companions—to remain cheerful at no one's expense.

These are the creme de la cream, as it were, of Rev. Smith's flock; they are the three to whom he has delegated the most authority. And it might be noted in passing that while Smith regarded the flock as a means of his own support, he has not altogether short-changed them—he has led many of them, however peripherally, to find themselves. At the same time, however, realize—as Smith does—that to find maturity they need only break free of the Receivers of the Lord; that would, of course, present some financial problems—to Smith.

"Hey, Reverend, how're you doing?" Simon broke away from a group huddled over a parchesi board on the floor. "What's in the bag?"

"Yeah, Reverend," Allan Bosnan echoed, "whatcha got in the bag?"

Smith opened the bag he carried to show them both what he had there. "Some drinking glasses I picked up," he said, adding hastily, "at a sale." He had, in fact, pocketed them at O'Leary's—one of them while still full of amber fluid. "We can wash 'em out and stencil our emblem on them—we could probably get a dollar each for 'em at the next rally."

Bosnan smiled, revealing uneven teeth. "That's great."

Simon said, "We'll start working on them. We've been at this game since three o'clock—there's not much else to do."

"*Not much else to do?*" Smith said loudly, not quite angrily, so that he got the attention of all around him. "My friend Simon, we have a *great deal* else to do. Idle hands are the Devil's tools. Remember, Simon, *we* are the *Receivers* of the *Lord*! We have a *heavy* load, but Glory Road is waiting for us. Now I tell you, Simon, and the rest of you, too, I have some announcements to make."

He now had everyone's attention. —well, *almost* everyone's attention;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Allan Bosnan picked up a glass and was on the verge of asking Reverend Smith what they were for when Smith suddenly went on, "We should all be ashamed—we've been goofing off, even though we've all *received* the Lord's bounteous blessing, we've *received* the Good Word—we've been complacent in the face of *sin* in our community. And yet we know," he paused to hold up a finger, "yes, we *know* the Lord forgives us. But we *must* do better—we *must* become receptacles to His Will . . . "

Susan began to cry. "You're so *right,* Reverend Smith," she said, her voice showing admiration, obeisance and fervor all at the same time. "You're *so* right!"

"First, we must grow," Smith went on after smiling at her, "we need more members of the Receivers of the Lord. Not, my friends, because I want it, but because today, when I was particularly open and receptive, the Lord revealed to me a portion of his Plan for Us. We must grow in number, dear friends, and the reason is—Professor Willis Baxter!"

"Who's he?" one of the flock asked.

"Isn't he in Administration?" Simon countered.

"He's the Chairman of the Arts and Sciences Division," Bosnan said.

And everyone—including Reverend Smith—stopped, turned, and looked at Bosnan in amazement.

It was Smith who recovered first. "Even so," he said, "that doesn't exempt him from sin. I have learned today, from an unimpeachable source, that Professor Baxter has dabbled in the Black Arts—to his peril—and that he is now possessed by a demon."

Their eyes went wide. Allan Bosnan said, "Wow. That's great!" but everyone ignored him.

"I cannot help but feel," Smith went on, "that the Lord would not have given me this piece of information if we were not supposed to do something about it. Just what, I admit," and here Smith nodded humbly, "I don't presently know—but I will pray for guidance. We have to work up to this—I know for sure the Lord is testing us, to see if we are worthy to receive and help bring about His Will. With about twenty more members, I'm sure we'll be in a position to help the professor."

"That should be easy," Simon yelled enthusiastically. "Once we tell them about Baxter, we'll have *more* than twenty!"

"Our cause is Just," Susan said righteously. "If it's a choice between heaven or hell, who can turn away from us? I'll cover the dormitories."

"Me and Fred can do the Student Union," Simon said.

Smith smiled. "We mustn't waste any time."

Simon and Susan managed to get most of the flock into their heavy overcoats and on their way toward either the dormitories or the Student Union; Smith just stood back and let them carry on what he had started.

When the room had cleared he settled down on the couch, took off his shoes, and almost laughed. It never ceased to amuse him—what people would believe. *Even in this day and age, with modern science and all its marvels around us,* he thought, *people will believe what they want to believe.* If that included impossibilities, like gods and demons, he knew, then so be it.

Smith had known, all along, that if these two college professors believed in demons—and apparently, after talking to the second one, that was the case—he would have no trouble convincing his flock. And, sure enough,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he had had no trouble.

He was taking off his shoes and socks when Allan Brosnan wandered in from the john, a glass in his hand and a puzzled expression on his face. "Did you say we were going to do something with these, Reverend?"

"Never mind, Allan," Smith said. "If you're going to trouble yourself to try to remember anything I said, keep in mind what I said about Professor Baxter."

"Who?"

"Write it down, Allan."

THROUGHOUT THE next week, Willis fell into the habit of returning from work later and later each day. It was the coward's way out, he knew, but he had begun to think of himself as just that—if he wasn't going to drink himself into oblivion, and he was determined to go on and stay on the wagon for a while, he would avoid the problem altogether.

By Friday, he was ready to leave his office at seven—except, when he walked out between the great white pillars of North Administration, he found he could go no farther—his way was blocked by the motliest group of students he had ever seen, and he thought of them that way even before he realized that they weren't just milling around or holding a meeting or a music fest, they were there to keep *him* in the building.

They lay across the steps like so many toppled dominoes.

They were chanting: "Demons must *go*! Demons must *go*! *From* the university! Demons must *go*!"

"I don't care much for the words," Willis said airily, "but I think I could dance to it."

But his small voice went unheard.

He stood on the wide cement steps, clutching his briefcase and surveying the jean-clad girls and fuzzy-coated bearded boys with long finger-curled hair who blocked his way, the winter wind forcing him deeper into his coat. That this demonstration was against him, and him alone, Willis could not doubt—for many of the demonstrators were carrying signs which read "Baxter Out!" and "Professor Baxter—Head of Devil Arts & Satan Sciences." One of them read, "Anti-DEMON-stration" and Willis almost wished he could find out who had come up with that idea—even in these circumstances, Willis could appreciate a sense of humor like that. Demonstrators, he reflected, so seldom had a sense of humor at all . . .

He considered turning around and trying the back exit to the building, but discarded that—he might not care what the demonstrators thought, but they were drawing on-lookers, and he cared what the on-lookers thought. Besides, suppose he accepted the loss of face, turned and stalked back into North Administration, then tried to creep out the back door only to find that these demonstrators, whoever they were, had rushed back to confront him there?

A tall youth with long dull-black hair who was wearing a loden-coat jumped away from the rest of the group and pointed an accusing finger at Willis. "We know all about you and practicing the Black Arts, Professor Baxter!" he screamed. "You think you can consort with demons and not endanger your immortal soul? We know the evil things you've done, but Reverend Smith and the Receivers of the Lord can save you!"

This didn't make a great deal of sense to Willis, but the demonstrators sprawled on the steps applauded, whistled, and yelled, "Yea, Simon!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who, Willis wondered, had put such ideas into their heads?

Did they know about Anathae?

Or was this just some kind of crazy coincidence?

Willis said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"That's the Devil in you talking," Simon said, stepping quickly from foot to foot in the cold. "We know better! Repent, professor, and save your soul! Repent and let the Reverend help you to find everlasting life through being born anew and Saved!"

From not that far away came the shrill siren of the campus police car.

Simon glanced back over his shoulder, gauged the distance between his group and the campus police, then spoke again. "You'll have to submit to ritual exorcism, but you'll—" he broke off as he saw that the crowd of curiosity-seekers was parting to let the campus police through, rather than serving as a wall between his demonstrators and the CPs as he had hoped.

But then, all week things had not quite gone according to plan. They had thought to gain new strength, and yet their number had grown from twenty to only thirty-seven—a goodly number of the students they had approached had expressed approval when they had been told that Professor Baxter had consorted with demons. It would not do, now, to have any of their number arrested.

Simon bolted down the steps, turning back at the bottom to yell at his followers: "Come on! Let's get out of here!"

Some of the demonstrators simply dropped their signs and faded back into the crowd of student onlookers around them—others broke and ran.

At a signal from Willis, the campus police did not pursue them. Instead, Chester Rawlins, the crusty chief of CPs, made his way to Willis' side. "Them freaks bother you, Professor?"

"Not really," Willis admitted. "It was no picnic, but I wasn't hurt and I didn't seem to be in any danger of being hurt—so I won't make a complaint against them. They're young, foolish, growing."

Willis tried to remember doing something foolish when he had been an undergraduate, but memory failed him. Perhaps, he thought, it was because his undergraduate days had been as uneventful as his life had been before Anathae had come into it.

Rawlins nodded, indicating a couple of men in suits in the crowd, one of whom had a camera. "Just as well," he said. "Looks like they planned on getting a little publicity—not that you'd be able to stop it, but they'd get more if you put in a formal complaint."

"Thanks for the help," Willis said.

Rawlins shrugged, went back down the steps and called to the other officers. One of them let go of a thin, pimple-faced girl who had been hawking shot glasses at a buck apiece; she looked somewhat disappointed when the tall, slim campus policeman released her.

Willis pushed his way through the crowd, wondering anew if this were just some kooky coincidence or if these demonstrators had somehow found out about Anathae.

ALLAN BROSNAN licked his lips and concentrated real hard. If Reverand Smith wanted him to remember what he had said about Professor Baxter, Allan was willing to make the effort—even to the extent of taking Smith's suggestion and writing it down in big block letters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1., he wrote. *Professor possess by demon.*

2. Get Professor for Rev. Smith.

3. Exercise demon.

After a great deal of concentration, Allan decided that while there may have been more, he had the major points down. He folded the paper and put it in his pocket.

WILLIS' walk home was cold and windy with the threat of snow hanging over him all the way; his fingers had grown so stiff by the time he got to the apartment that he could hardly turn the key in the lock.

But at last he did.

He went in, dropped his briefcase, then pulled off his muffler and coat and threw them onto the coach. "Anathae!" he called.

She came out of the bedroom, dressed in a pale blue dress.

"I have dinner ready for you," she said. She pointed her dainty finger at the dining room table where a steak dinner appeared, complete with white lace tablecloth and three-tiered candleabra.

"Well," he said, "I see there *is* an advantage to having you around." He said it lightly, as banter, and she took it as such.

She smiled and touched his cheek. "You seem to be in a better mood—despite those freaks at Powhattan that have you so upset."

Willis knew that news of the event could hardly have preceded him, which meant that she could only have gotten it from his mind. "Dammit," he snapped, "I thought I told you not—"

"I'm sorry, Will," she interrupted. "I forgot you didn't want me doing that."

Willis was immediately sorry, too. He had not intended to snap at her like that—he had, in fact, been trying to work himself up to the point of confronting his problem with her. He couldn't quite do it yet, but he still wanted to avoid unnecessary and pointless arguments with her.

Willis mumbled apologies and sank wearily down into his easy chair.

"Believe me," Anathae said, "if they ever come here again—"

"They were *here*? Those religious nuts?" Willis sat bolt upright, then spread his hand across his eyes. He reached into his shirt pocket and took out a cellophane of Di-Gel; he unwrapped one carefully and popped it into his mouth. "Tell me exactly what happened."

Anathae bent over him, took hold of his arm and gave him a gentle tug away from his seat. "Over dinner," she said. "I won't let them spoil dinner—I'll tell you while we eat."

So they went to the table and Anathae slipped smoothly onto her chair; as she did so, her dress changed to a low-cut black satin gown which clung hungrily to her supple body.

"It was nothing, really," she said, poking a fork into her Ceasar salad. "These four guys all came and beat on the door, yelling about some Reverend who could save your soul. It was sort of amusing, at first."

"Those creeps have no right to come here," Willis said heatedly. He frowned. "What, exactly, did they say to you?"

Anathae forked at the bread cubes hidden under her lettuce.

"They didn't so much say *anything* to *me*. I think they thought you might be here. They were yelling, but like you might expect someone to yell if they're really not sure anyone can hear them—you know? Anyway, they said you were endangering your im-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mortal soul by letting demons lose on the world and that you'd end up in some special level of purgatory before you broiled in Hell. That was when I started to get annoyed."

"Annoyed?"

"Nothing annoys me quite like people pretending to expertise when they don't know what they're really talking about. They weren't even sure they believed what they were yelling themselves, they were just trying to convince each other that they believed it. That's when I turned all the water to ice."

"Water? Ice?"

"Out in front of the apartment, around the steps. They started slipping and sliding, and grabbing hold of each other for support. Then, after they'd all four fallen down two or three times apiece, they started to get angry at each other. They stopped shouting for you and started shouting at each other. To hear them tell it, there's also a special level of purgatory where people get broiled for not keeping their hands to themselves when they can see the other fellow is slipping."

Willis laughed at the picture Anathae painted, feeling mirth for the first time in several days. He forced himself to be serious. "We do have a problem, though, and I can't help but wonder what started it. I mean, why are these kids suddenly coming down on me? To be frank, I would have expected something like this to happen a week or so after that first party I conjured you up at—but it's been over a year. So where did these kids find out about my 'consorting with demons'?"

Anathae took up a crystal wine glass and sipped Château Ausone. "It seems their 'Reverend Smith'—whoever he is—picked it up somewhere in the past week—that's what I gathered from reading about the Reverand, but the kids are all in deadly earnest—they're horrified that you're 'risking your immortal soul', as they put it."

Willis shrugged. "So what the hell do they know?"

Anathae savored the last few drops of wine from her glass, then said, "You don't sound very convinced."

"It's not that," Willis said quickly. He made a great show of cutting his steak and did not speak again until he had reduced the entire piece to little squares a kitten could have eaten. "It's just," he went on, "that no one knows what happens—after death. By what standards are we judged? Is there a feather of truth against which our souls are weighed? Does our relationship, yours and mine, fall into the category of 'consorting with demons'—and if so, does it automatically consign my soul to Hell?"

Anathae laughed—her laughter was like a tiny tinkling bell. "Would you believe me if I answered those questions? After all, Will, I *am* a demon."

Willis smiled too, then looked earnestly into Anathae's dark green eyes. "I don't think you'd deliberately lie to me, Ana. We know each other—I think we're even coming to understand each other—but we have a problem, or more properly *I* have a problem that affects both of us, and we need to talk about it. Let's start here, far afield—if you know the truth, why not tell it to me?"

"Okay, Will," she said, "I'll tell you whatever you want to know—but I don't expect you'll believe me. Anyway, I'm not absolutely certain that what knowledge I have could be labled Truth with a capital 'T'."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Huh?"

Her eyes got a far-away look as her pink tongue darted over her lips. "I mean—Well, let me give you an example. You go off to some primitive country and meet a bunch of natives who naturally assume, because you can kill a wild beast with a noisy stick from some distance, that you have the inside track on the truth. If one of them asked you whether the idols they worshipped were really gods, what would you say? How would you explain the universe to them—and would you introduce them to the more sophisticated 'gods' of your culture? What things are you certain of, and what things do you accept on faith? And how do you make that savage understand the difference between the two?"

"You're saying I'm the equivalent of a backward native?"

"Not 'backward'," Anathae said. "Humans have a number of things which make them superior to demons, not the least of which is their potential to choose to be for good or evil, to choose actions, and your quest for knowledge. But particularly because of the latter, you have—your entire tribe has—a lot of preconceptions. And, like I said, there are a lot of things I'm not really any more certain of than you are, although I have a few more certainties than you do."

"Well, try me with a few of those," Willis said.

"I've lived through a number of civilizations here, Will, and each one had a whole system worked out about what happened after death. Back in Egypt, they thought a person's *ka*, his or her vital force, rejoined the Life Force when they died. That was close—sort of an 'oversoul' idea.

"The specifics—like the *ka* crossing the water and a field of rushes to find an existance just like the one they'd left, or the Greek's idea of crossing the Styx to a find a gem-lit underworld, or the Hebrew's of a great chasm between heaven and hell—they were all wrong. But the underlying *idea* was sound."

Anathae paused to eat a bit of steak and a bite of bread, then went on: "So what, you want to know, is the netherworld? It's all one place, Will. Dying does bring your force back to the oversoul—but it has nothing to do with what kind of life you lead. It doesn't matter so much what you do here and now—you'll end up the same. When you're born back to life, you'll be as blank as any baby—heredity and environment will shape your thoughts, although sometimes you carry your basic goodness or badness around in your subsequent lives, too. There's a part of yourself that's beyond your ego and intellect which is your essence—and it's your essence which is truly immortal. So look at it this way—you're basically a good person, Will. Most of the time you know that—occasionally your confidence falls and you think of yourself as a nebbish, at which point you start losing your temper over nothing and become a bit of a bastard. But you're basically good—you don't try to hurt people, when you do you feel bad about it, and you have intellectual curiosity, honesty and integrity going for you. I'd say overall that's a good underthought to carry on into the next life."

Willis sat staring into the candle flame, which had grown brighter as the daylight outside the apartment dwindled. He looked from the flame to Anathae.

"It sounds good," he said, "except for one problem. You read my mind, give me everything by magic, and you

DIGITIZED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stay a sexy child all your life—you're a demon, and proof by your very existence of the existence of Hell."

"Oh, that," Anathae said with a shrug. "The place you call 'Hell' and the place you call 'Heaven' are one and the same. An alternate dimension which touches this dimension on the two sides where they match—a triangle and a tetrahedron. Magic reigns in that dimension, as you well know—it's possible for inhabitants of that dimension to cross over, or be barred from crossing over, to this one—provided someone here, on *this* side says the proper words and makes the right preparations."

Anathae frowned. "I don't know about going the other way. I think, for someone like you to get there in your present form, it would require making a machine of some sort on the other side—although don't ask me what kind, because I haven't got the slightest idea.

"Anyway, Gods, devils, angels, demons—they're just words humans have used to describe the inhabitants from that dimension whom they have met. Magic is the other dimension's way of creating balance in its universe. There's a tremendous battle going on there—always has been—the nature of which even I don't entirely understand. Except that neither side wants to win it totally, because that would topple the balance. So if what you would want to call the 'bad' side loses a particular battle, the 'good' side waits until it recovers to continue the fight. And vice-versa, of course."

"What about," Willis asked, his forehead creased in concentration, "you know, all those things about making deals with the devil or some demon for one's soul. Is that sort of thing for real?"

"Ah," Anathae said, "Good thing you brought that up. You know what I am—a half-human, half-demon. In that dimension, I'm on what you would call the 'bad' side—but I'm very minor, as you know, as demons go. My training was in making mischief, not in inflicting real harm on anyone. But there are major demons, Will, and they will gladly make deals with mortals for their souls—or would, that is, until most of them were permanently locked into their own dimension. But even then, the mortals weren't tormented."

"What happened to them, then?"

"Your essence, your force, is your own—and like anything else that is yours, it can be given up. If you make a magic bond with a demon for your soul, your essence, the demon can claim it after you die. He merely 'cleans' it, which is to say, he washes your essence out of it and then he uses it."

"He uses it? In what way? I mean, does he wear it, pretend to be human or something?"

"Uh, no."

"Well, what does he use it for?"

Anathae's voice was almost a whisper: "Wallpaper."

"You wouldn't kid me, would you, Ana? I mean, this isn't the stock joke demons tell curious mortals when they ask about Hell, is it? I think I could understand it better if that were the case."

Anathae shook her head from side to side. "You think about it, Will—it's not a joke. It's either the truth or a riddle—mortals never could tell one from the other. But don't let the netherworld, or these kids with their half-baked dogma, bother you—your soul is in no danger from me, and I'd do anything for you."

Willis looked into her youthful face—a face that all logic told him was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thousands of years old, and yet which did not look a day over fourteen. The breasts which peeked from her satin gown, indeed the line of her slim graceful body where it curved in and out, broadcast adolesence. And that was it, that was the basis of the Problem—if he could but bring it up to her. It was not something, he knew, which would be improved by the new positions she had suggested—the problem he was having with this child-woman was deeper than that; it was interwoven, somehow, with her slender almost childish figure and a resemblance he had come to note in her of late to his niece, Maribelle, who was just fifteen and who lived with his sister in Elkridge.

She had even, in this conversation with him, complimented him for his honesty—yet still he could not bring this up. *Because it's not her fault*, he thought. Instead, he smiled at her, they finished their meal, and then they were together in bed.

"I don't know if I—" he started.

"You can," she said.

And, although it wasn't magic, he found that he could make love to her again—and so he did what he could.

And yet it was not totally joyous, nor totally satisfying, and when they were spent and finished, lying together, he said at last, "Perhaps we're seeing too much of each other."

LOVE IS ALIVE in the world. And it is written—right in front of your eyes, Dear Reader, if nowhere else—that There Is Someone for Everyone.

If that means, as it sometimes does, that Cupid is capricious with his darts, so be it.

Reverend Smith knocked at the door and it was answered by Henrietta Bradmorton.

"Mrs. Bradmorton?"

"Miss," she said.

"Miss Bradmorton. My name is Smith—the Reverand John Smith. May I come in? No, I'm not here to—I mean, I'd like to talk to you about your neighbor, Professor Willis Baxter. I won't take more than a few moments of your time. Please?"

Henrietta Bradmorton looked at Reverend Smith skeptically, then stepped aside. "Well, uh, come in, ah, Reverend. For just a few minutes, though."

WHAT WAS THAT? Not exactly lines from *Romeo and Juliet*, did you say? Perhaps not. Indeed not, for there's no one named either Bradmorton or Smith in *Romeo and Juliet*. So much for that.

And yet, from little acorns great saplings grow—and you may quote me on that, Dear Reader. We must consider how these two view each other, how their psychologies and separate needs intertwine.

Henrietta Bradmorton is not all that bad to look upon, really, although in truth the bloom of youth is no longer on her, either. Yet it has not been all that long since men pursued her, were spurned, and dropped her like a hot (strike that, make it "cold") potato—proving, if the old Russian addage was to be believed, that they did not really love her. (The old Russian addage: "Love is not a potato. You can't throw it out the window.") While she had never shown her disappointment in the way things had gone in her lack-of-lovelife, it did not necessarily follow that she had never felt it: She had felt, at times, as if she had been thrown out the window.

Moreover, her activities as a busybody had come upon her as a result of her relatively recent isolation; where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was she to meet men of her own age, or find entertainment, chained to a telephone sales job? Why watch *The Guiding Light*, or *As The World Turns*, when there was real live drama in the next apartment?

Now she saw before her a man, as young as she considered herself, who because of his calling she might be able to trust.

And that man, a mail-order reverend and most-times small-time con man, saw two things in her: As a neighbor, she was the potential supplier of relevant information about the professor—but as a woman, now that he had beheld her, as something quite a bit more personal. Smith might lack imagination in some quarters, and fail to follow-through on some of his thinking in some areas, but the bedroom was not one of these. He had long had a yearning for mature female companionship—there were more joys to life, after all, than collecting baseball cards—but his true calling, that of a con man, had ere now denied him the opportunity of a long-term or meaningful romance.

Yet John Smith knew, from the moment he first saw her, that somehow he was looking on her with more than passing lust—just as he knew, by the way her hand rested upon his as she led him into her front room, that she had more than a passing interest in him.

Speaking of which, let us return:

"MISS BRADMORTON—"

"Henrietta, please."

"Yes. Henrietta. And you must call me John." Pause. "Well, uh, about Professor Baxter. You see, I was wondering—"

"Immoral. That professor. She lives with him—that teenaged girl. And I can tell, by his eyes, he's doing terrible things to her. Terrible."

"Yes, I'm sure, but I—"

"Terrible things," Henrietta said. "I've done everything I can, even called Social Services. Fornication—I've tried, God knows I've tried."

What, Smith wondered, did that mean? She had tried fornication? "So have I, Henrietta. And I want to help," he said.

"Yes," she said, nodding, "you look like someone who'd try to help."

"I am," he assured her, moving closer on the divan, daring to touch her arm.

"You know," she said, "it's not as if she was old enough to handle a relationship like that. There are, after all, some standards of decency."

"Oh, I agree, wholeheartedly," Smith said, still touching her arm. "You're a mature woman, Henrietta—you understand a lot about these things."

"Those terrible things they do."

"Yes, I can imagine. We can both imagine."

"Nights they spend together—"

"Alone—touching, holding each other, like—"

"Yes."

LET US draw the curtain here, Dear Reader, although things are just starting to get interesting and although it might even be said (and in fact, let us come right out and say it) that dormant passions in Henrietta Bradmorton and John Smith have been aroused, and that both are being swept along in their wake.

Very well.

Dormant passions in both Henrietta Bradmorton and John Smith have been aroused and both are being swept along in their wake.

And that, really, is all that need concern us, inasmuch as we've all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been through far too many lyrical descriptions of lovemaking in our reading to need any more. What matter that in a few moments the ersatz reverend and nosy neighbor will begin an embrace that will only end when both are disrobed and lustily getting to know each other—in the Biblical sense, of course? Need each conjugal push and shove, each joyful shout of "John!" or "Henrietta!" or "Deeper!" or "Harder!" or "This is wonderful!" be described in graphic titillating detail? Must each tender caress of breast and thigh and face and buttock, each nibble of lip and ear and throat and areola, be paraded?

Indeed, not.

WILLIS brushed snowflakes off his coat, stamped his feet on the welcome mat in front of his door, walked into his apartment and shouted, "Anathae!"

He went into the living room, the kitchen, the bathroom, the bedroom—she was not in the apartment.

"Ana!" he called half-heartedly. "I'm sorry," he said to the empty apartment.

Then he found the note in the bedroom, on his folded trousers.

Dear Will, it read. *Maybe you're right. Maybe we are seeing too much of each other. Anathae.*

That was it. The note was not even handwritten, but seemed to be embossed on fancy stationery as though it were an announcement.

But an announcement of what? he wondered. *Where has she gone and when will she be back?*

Just that morning, a Saturday, he had awakened to find her sleeping peacefully beside him after their night of so-so lovemaking. But he had had to go back to the campus to bring home some files for review, some papers to grade. He had to busy himself with something, because tonight he had to go to that faculty party over in the new Blakely Memorial Building at the edge of the campus.

And now Anathae was not here.

Willis glanced at his watch. He dreaded going to that faculty party, and yet dared not be late. He did not feel that he could put up with the gossip that he would be expected to filter and repeat, the kow-towing and jockeying for position and prominance among the professors and their wives and their pitiful attempts to make the "proper" impression. Worst of all, there would be drinks—and Willis had lost his desire to drink, at least for the time being.

He moped around the apartment for a couple of hours, not finishing the meager amount of work he had assigned himself.

By seven o'clock Anathae still had not returned.

Where can she be?

There was no point in worrying. Besides, he decided, if she didn't want to be with him, she didn't have to be. *(Now there*, he thought, *is the true illogic of my position. First I tell her we're seeing too much of each other—then I feel rejected because she listens to me and tries to do what I ask of her. I have got to be going out of my tree. But where can she be?)*

Willis somberly dressed himself in a dark suit and went to the Blakely Memorial Building alone.

"OH, Professor Baxter, do come in. Your ward's not with you? Too bad. Everyone else seems already to have arrived." Dean Cromwell Smith's wife, Olivia, took Willis' hand and drew him into the sparkling chandalier-lit room. "Have an hors d'oeuvre," she said, adjusting her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

silver grey wig.

Willis obediently took a tiny hotdog in a bun from a large pewter tray along the wall. He sought desparately for some ploy to escape Olivia Smith, who had a habit of grabbing unattached professors and attaching herself to them.

"That's a lovely green pantsuit," he said, watching her eyes shine with the compliment. "And what a novel idea—you and Gertrude Twill wearing practically the same thing."

Mrs. Smith peered into the crowd of men that had formed, as it always did of late, around the toothsome Trudy Twill, who was secretary to both Dean Smith and Willis Baxter. "Why, so we are," Mrs. Smith said faintly. "Of course, she's much too thin these days—poor girl. Another 20 or 25 pounds and her clothes wouldn't hang so. Of course, nowadays young people seem to want that lean, half-starved look—they're probably vulnerable to any sickness that goes around when they treat themselves like that.

"You go on and enjoy yourself, Professor Baxter—but please do me a favor. I seem to have spilled something on my jacket, so if you see Cromwell about, please assure him that I've not snuck off with the new biology professor but have only run home to change."

Willis nodded as Mrs. Smith hurried toward the cloakroom. Then, taking up a few crackers spread with pâté de foie gras, he ambled forward looking for a friendly face.

At last in his wanderings about, he came upon the corpulent person of Larry Hawthorne, talking with Peregrine Forsythe (Mathematics), Frank Petruccio (Chemistry) and David Rosenheim (Economics). The wives of the three latter gentlemen—all full professors, save Petruccio who was an associate professor—were glittering in chiffon and sequin evening attire.

"Glad to see you," Hawthorne said, looking uncomfortable in the jacket and tie he wore. "You know Professor and Mrs. Forsythe—we were just discussing the importance of mathematics to the general diploma student."

"I thought these parties were supposed to be a place where we got away from our everyday cares," Willis said.

Hawthorne shrugged.

"You alone tonight?" Perry Forsythe asked. "I've heard you have a lovely . . . ward." He smoothed back his thinning hair as though he thought that Anathae might somehow appear from the woodwork—as, indeed, local legend had it that she had at a special party for Norman Rockhurst, back when Willis had been a lowly professor of Medievil Literature.

"That girl's a bit *young*," Mrs. Forsythe muttered to Mrs. Rosenheim. The three women sipped from stemmed glasses, then began to talk in low voices to each other. Mrs. Forsythe snickered; Mrs. Petruccio sneered; Mrs. Rosenheim laughed.

Willis felt anger so cold that it burned his cheeks, but he nodded as though the remark, the following whispers, and the reactions to the whispered remarks had all gone unnoticed—as if the remark had not been heard and the conversation and laughter which followed had not been about himself and Anathae.

The three professors and their wives moved off just the slightest bit and Willis was alone with Hawthorne. Willis was trying so hard to keep his feelings in check that he only heard the tail-end of what Hawthorne had been saying to him: ". . . so I felt I should apologize."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What? I'm sorry, Larry—my mind was elsewhere and I didn't hear you. What did you say?"

"No big thing," Hawthorne said. "I was apologizing to you, is all. I heard about that student demonstration against you, and I couldn't help but think that I may have been a contributing factor."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. You remember the other night, when we were in O'Leary's together and you went home but I stayed behind?"

Willis nodded—he recalled.

"It's sort of funny," Hawthorne said. "All that time we were talking together, I had this feeling that the guy across from us was listening to what we were saying, you know? I mean, I kept catching his eye, and he kept looking away—like he didn't want to be caught looking at us. I mean, if he wasn't listening, why was he always looking away just as I turned to look at him—you know?

"Anyway, after you left, he came up and said he hoped you'd make it home all right—you were, if my memory serves me, three sheets to the wind at the time."

"I suppose," Willis interjected, "that's about as close as one could come to a quick summation. And even there you might be a sheet short."

"Could be. Anyway, this guy came up and admitted as much—said he couldn't help but overhear some of our conversation. And he asked me if I believed in demons, so I said—I was pretty spiffed myself, understand—I said, sure, I believe in 'em. So he started asking about you, whether you had been possessed by a demon, or had he misunderstood—and I answered him. For a while, I did—then I started getting the feeling that he was trying to pump me for information about you, for some reason.

"So I stopped shooting off my mouth about you and you-know-who and started telling lies. You know—you were *possessed* by a demon, ala *The Exorcist*, only pretty soon I decided that wasn't such a good idea, either, so I just clammed up. I think he may have suspected I was lying when I was lying—but I don't know for sure. Anyway, he introduced himself as Smith—which I remembered because it's such a common name. I couldn't understand, though, what he wanted to know about you and Ana for—and so when we parted company I didn't think any more about it, until I heard about that demonstration against you. I understand these kids are followers of a Reverend Smith—and it all clicked. I'm really sorry."

"Oh, hell," Willis said, "you meant no harm—and no real harm came of it. Forget it, Larry—I already have."

"Good," Hawthorne said. "So what have you been up to lately? Haven't seen much of you since then."

The three professors and their wives, who had been engaged in a conversation of their own, turned back to Willis and Hawthorne in time to hear Hawthorne's question.

"The usual hum-drum stuff at the university," Willis answered, considering taking a drink from a liveried waiter who paused nearby with a heavily laden tray. He decided against it. "Everything's so under control there, I could take a sabbatical and there would be no ripples in the water."

"Didn't know you had any research projects under way," Professor Rosenheim said conversationally. He held his wife's arm tightly, Willis noted; she had seemed about to say something but a frown from her hus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

band had frozen her lips shut.

Willis was simultaneously saddened and amused, he realized that Rosenheim was holding his wife in check. It was both funny and sad because it was the sort of truth one does not care to look straight in the eye: Even a full professor in economics does not want his wife insulting the chairman of the arts and sciences division of the university—and the reason has nothing whatsoever to do with whether he may agree or disagree with the insults the wife would mouth if he were not there to hold her in check.

"Actually," Willis said, more to cover the silence than because the conversation interested him, "it's been one of my lifetime desires to travel, see in person some of the German and Balkan manuscripts. Unfortunately, a lot of things have kept me from that."

"A lot of things," Mrs. Petruccio said to Mrs. Forsythe under her breath, "or a pair?" Mrs. Forsythe reddened.

Willis reached out toward a passing tray, snared a large glass of amber liquid which he quickly downed without tasting, then turned to Mrs. Petruccio.

"And what the hell was that supposed to mean?" he asked.

Mrs. Petruccio paid him no heed—she pretended to be deep in conversation with Mrs. Forsythe.

"I said, 'and what the hell was that supposed to *mean*,' Mrs. Petruccio, when I said that a number of things had kept me from travelling and you asked whether I meant a number of things or a pair. A pair of what, Mrs. Petruccio?"

The three professors, their wives, Hawthorne, and a number of bystanders were aware of what was going on.

"Beg your pardon?" Mrs. Petruccio said sweetly, the red sequins on her ample bosom glittering as she trembled. "Are you addressing me?" There was an ever-so-slight touch of sarcasm to her words.

"I wasn't aware that there was more than one Mrs. Petruccio in this room," Willis said acidly, crushing the pâté and crackers in his hand—an action he regretted immediately. "But now—I'm looking right at you, since you don't seem to know your own name when you're called by it—I'm addressing you. And what I have to say to you is really quite simple. Desist in your gossip, Mrs. Petruccio—if not because it harms those you talk about, then because it harms you. Learn to behave in a civilized manner, Mrs. Petruccio—that does not include making snide remarks behind peoples' backs. You reveal yourself each time you do these things, Mrs. Petruccio, and the end result will not be anything you like. Try replacing jealousy, spite and maliciousness with grace, humor and good will toward your fellow human beings, Mrs. Petruccio.

"Hello, there? Mrs. Petruccio? Have you heard anything that I've said? Wake up!"

Mrs. Petruccio, at first non-plussed at Willis' outburst, now allowed herself an icy smile; she touched her husband's arm to prevent him from moving in on Willis. "Why, whatever can you be talking about, Professor Baxter?" she asked. "Could it be that you are feeling guilty about something? Hmm? Could it be that you're projecting these feelings of guilt onto us, trying to make us the responsible parties? Yet how can you accomplish this, professor—how can we be held responsible, even in *your* mind, for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your peccadilloes, your gallivanting, your, ah, love of youth?"

"That does it," Willis said evenly. "Mrs. Petruccio, let me explain two things to you. The first of these two things is that you have no conception of my relationship with Anathae—no conception at all. And the reason you have no conception, no idea at all, as to the truth of the matter, is really quite simple. Now listen up. The *reason* is because my relationship with Anathae, really, is none of your goddamned business."

"Just a minute, Baxter," Professor Petruccio said testily, "you're talking to my wife."

Turning to the chemistry professor, Willis said, "Thank you very much, professor, for making that point. No, I'm not being facetious—I honestly think it's a point well worth making and emphasizing. I am talking *to* your wife, while your wife is—or has been—talking about someone I love *behind her back*. That's one of the things—the essential corwardice—that I so dislike about malicious gossip, professor. What I'm saying to your wife now is to her face—and what she may have to say about me, or about Anathae, when neither of us is here will, of course, once again be behind our backs.

"You see," Willis continued, turning back to Mrs. Petruccio, "I truly doubt that my outburst here will curb your tongue. It doesn't matter—and that's my second point. If any part of your pleasure in maligning those you do not know comes from the belief that your opinion is of any value to them, then let me disabuse you of that notion in this instance.

"Mrs. Petruccio, you and your opinion simply have no value to me. I have survived some 37 years without your approval or good opinion, and I'm prepared to survive the next 37 without them. Good night."

Willis turned as if to leave, but quickly turned back to them, smiling cheerfully at Mrs. Petruccio. "In fact," he said, "you've made me realize that. And in some screwy way, I owe you thanks. So, although we cannot hope to be friends, in keeping with the spirit of the occasion, I'd like to shake your hand." So saying, Willis reached out to Mrs. Petruccio and succeeded, as her eyes widened in disbelief, in leaving more than half the pâté and cracker in her hand.

Then, with a chuckle, he turned and left them all standing there.

Willis headed for the bar, which was near the door. Wiping the rest of the pâté from his hand, Willis ignored the bartender's polite inquiry but pulled a bottle of whiskey from the table.

No one said anything to him as he went out the door and, leaving his VW where it was parked, set off on foot for his apartment.

WHILE ALL THIS was going on, Allan Bosnan studied a little list.

Rememver Allan Bosnan, Dear Reader?

Allan Bosnan was no Albert Einstein, but he could see that the demonstration which had been run by Simon and Susan had not succeeded in getting the professor for Reverend Smith. It had not succeeded in getting the professor to exercise. It had been, in other words, a failure.

Deep down inside, Allan Bosnan wants very much to make a good impression on Reverend Smith. All his life, Allan has tried very hard to do things for people he considers his friends—only to have them backfire, usually because he had not quite understood what the friend really

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wanted of him. This frequently resulted in friends becoming former friends. For example, the friend who had unthinkingly expressed the desire to be able to fly without an airplane—Allan had simply picked him up and tossed him 30 feet.

Or, for another example, the football coaches here at Powhattan. Allan's size and strength had not gone unnoticed—although he had never played in high school, the coaches had arranged for Allan to come to Powhattan, where they were certain Allan could be turned into a holy terror on the football field. And, indeed, they were partly right—he was a holy terror on the field. The coaches had been his friends, and he had tried to do what they wanted. What they wanted, they explained, was for him to tackle the man carrying the ball. Which he did. Regardless of which team had the ball. Which discouraged his coaches no end.

Allan sat considering the list he had written in large block letters—he did not want to make another, similar, mistake again.

IT WAS a long, cold walk, but Willis did not notice. Frequent draughts from his bottle warmed him somewhat, but did not restore him to any positive state of mind.

By the time he reached his apartment and fitted his key into the lock, he was angry and depressed—more angry and more depressed than he could ever remember being.

"Come in," Anathae said, her voice drifting towards him on waves of perfume as he opened the door. He peered through the soft purple light that seemed to emanate from the bedroom, then pushed the door shut behind him.

He was glad to see her back—"Ana!" he said brightly—but it was not enough to pull him back up out of the doldrums he had drunk himself into. "You in bed already?" he mumbled.

The wall clock struck a single *ding*, indicating 8:30. Willis came into the bedroom and saw Anathae arranged in the enticing altogether.

"You can't say we've seen too much of each other today!" Anathae got onto her knees and grabbed him by the hand. "Did you miss me, Will?"

Willis sighed and sank down onto the bed.

"God, yes, I missed you—very much. Jus' foun' out tonight—I just found out. Don't *care*—this is what I jus' found out—don't *care* what those nincompoops think."

Willis pulled the empty bottle from beneath his coat and shook his head *in weariness*. "It's no use. No use. They think you're a child. They think I'm screwing a minor. That I'm a lecherous, immoral cad. I got some satisfaction—I told 'em off. Told 'em where to stick it. But, pish, talkin' to them, tryin' to talk to 'em, it's like trying to explain how to drive a stick shift—to a cranberry."

Anathae pressed her lithe body against him; her creamy face brushed his stubbled chin.

"Forget them, Will," she said. "Let me help you forget."

She began to unbutton his shirt.

"Them 'n their catty remarks. Pish. So I left—walked out. Serves 'em right. Because I spent years—you hear me, Anathae?—*years* caring to the point of almost getting an ulcer What People Thought. Suddenly, tonight, wham, it hit me—what do they matter? What does their opinion matter? Do I kick up my heels and die if I don't have their good opinion or if they don't approve of me or what I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do? God, what freedom!

"Why, I could be a hero. I could, y'know. Most people just won't let the hero outa themselves. They just don't believe it's there. They—"

While Willis rambled on, Anathae slipped his shirt down off his shoulders so that it came to rest against the fist which held the bottle. She struggled with his belt, then pulled his zipper.

"—let 'em bite. I don't care. Let 'em bite all they want. They wanna be snakes instead of heros, let 'em—I'm immune to their venom," Willis muttered, shaking his bottle as if the shirt sleeve might fall over his hand and what it held. "Only thing that they can do that still bothers me is when they talk about you."

Anathae sat up from the job she had undertaken. "Me? What about me?"

Willis fell back against the pillows and and the bottle slipped from his hand. "Are you too young for me? 'm I leadin' you down th' path of sin?"

Anathae laughed merrily.

"Five thousand years doesn't make me a spring chicken, Will. And as for sin—well, sex has gotten a lot of bad press, but so has practically everything else that's enjoyable. Those people still think they're living in a time when sex means babies—or if they're aware that times have changed, they wish that they hadn't."

Anathae's long red tail stood erect behind her.

"So true," Willis said and sighed. "And here we are, steeped in bigots, waist deep in would-be medlers. I say it doesn't matter—an' it's true. On one level, it's true—it doesn't matter. On the other hand, it's rather like spending eternity sloshing around in sewage. There's gotta be something better. Got to!"

"What were their names—the ones who talked about me?" Anathae asked.

"Mrs. Forsythe, Petruccio and Rosenheim." Willis opened one eye as Anathae tugged at his shirt, dropped it to the floor, then began untying his shoelaces. "Hey—somethin' I been meanin' to ask you. For a long time."

"What?"

"How come you—I mean, how come you look as young? As you do? I mean, 13 or 14 or so? I've wondered."

Anathae dropped one of Willis' shoes on the floor and began untying the other. "I decided on that a long time back," she said with a smile. "I could use illusion to look any way I wanted—pretty or ugly—of course, but it would be a strain to maintain it over a long period of time. On the other hand, I could freeze my age any time I felt like it—and when I reached 15 human years, I found I enjoyed the way I looked. So I stopped there."

Willis nodded, closed his eye again.

Plop went the other shoe.

Anathae tugged and his trousers came down. She folded them, placed them on a chair by the bed; she covered Willis and climbed in beside him, twining her arms around him. "Don't worry, Will. Things will get better—perhaps tomorrow. You just wait and see."

Anathae waited for Willis to answer.

A few minutes passed by, and then Willis began, ever so gently, to snore.

IT MIGHT BE NOTED, in passing, that the faculty party went on without Willis. It might also be noted that the party, and that which apparently fol-

DIGITIZED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lowed it, was the main topic of gossip in the Powhattan community for the next several months.

It seems that Mrs. Forsythe went home with Associate Professor Petruccio; Mrs. Petruccio went home with Professor Rosenheim, and Mrs. Rosenheim went home with Professor Forsythe. Few people chose to believe their claim that they were not aware of this until the next morning because they had all had too much to drink.

It might have all blown over without anyone the wiser, except that an Assistant Professor's wife—who had not had anything at all to drink—had noted the strange pairing in the parking lot. This assistant professor's wife was, by some unhappy stroke of Fate for the three couples involved, the sort of person who could be counted on to spread any news to everyone on campus, particularly if you were to say to her, "Now don't breath a word of this to a soul . . . "

This assistant professor's wife had many friends on campus, but even they might not have believed her about this seeming *menage a six* had not the Petruccio's paper boy noted the hasty departure of Mrs. Forsythe from the Petruccio abode the next morning, and confirmed the rumor as fact to his mother—who was the wife of Powhattan's Assistant Dean for Planning and Research—just as she was getting the juicy tidbit from the assistant professor's wife and proclaiming her inability to believe such a thing.

Just why these things happened to happen the way they did, and what forces may have been brought into play, your humble author does not care to offer, except perhaps by way of this observation: It has been written that '(S)He who messes with the bull gets the horns,' and it may well be that the same rule applies to demons.

Don't worry, Will, Anathae had said the night before. *Things will get better—perhaps tomorrow. You just wait and see.*

Sunday morning, through nothing Anathae had done, turned out to be unseasonably warm, with blue skies and puffy cottonball clouds. Although the morning paper on Willis' doorstep forecast a 30 percent chance of rain, nowhere was there even a hint of precipitation. So to that extent, at least, the day was "better".

Willis stooped to pick up the paper and immediately regretted the action—the movement started his head throbbing again. "That settles it," he mumbled to himself, "no more booze."

He closed the door—*very* gently—and moved slowly and as soundlessly as possible back into the lonely apartment. He was frowning, partly because his hangover hurt, and partly because he realized that Anathae was, for the second time in as many days, nowhere to be found. He could not remember any other time in the past year when he had not awakened to find her sleeping beside him.

Willis was angry at himself for having come so close, the night before, to bringing the problem out in the open, only to fall asleep on her before he could tell her how he did not really feel that they were spending too much time together. He now realized how much a part of him she was, how he had grown used to her company and conversation—and how he dreaded the thought of possibly losing her.

He made a slow turn through the apartment, as if he might have over-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked her on his first search. He found the note in the bedroom—another embossed-on-fancy-stationery job—on his folded trousers.

Dear Will, it read. *I'll be away again today. Why don't you relax? Watch a little tv*—Willis would have snorted, but that would have been too painful in his present condition—he didn't want to hear someone chewing cheese with rubber teeth, much less a noisome Sunday tv program. He returned to the note: *—or read a book? Just forget about the University for a while and maybe things will be better for us tonight. /s/ Ana.*

Willis put the note aside and sighed.

Getting dressed took more effort than usual and when he finally got out of the kitchen, there was no hot breakfast waiting in the usual place.

"Damn Cheerios," Willis muttered, picking them up individually as he spilled them over the rim of his bowl. After searching carefully through the drawers, he found a clean spoon; then, after another expedition, he located the sugar bowl in the back of a cupboard; there was no regular milk, so he combined half-and-half with skim milk. His solitary breakfast was not equal to the sum of its parts.

If only Ana were here, he thought, *I'd make it up to her*. By "it" he meant a great many things—his foul humor of the past couple of months, his bad behavior the previous night, and all the things he had done in between that had served to keep them apart.

It was at this moment that the doorbell chimed.

Willis smiled through the pain that this caused him. She was back! Their life together could now begin anew, on a sweeter note than it had ever been. So thinking, Willis was surprised when he threw open the door to see that it was not Anathae, or anyone else he knew, at all.

It was a student. A very *large* student—350 pounds of muscle on a seven-foot frame.

Surely, Dear Reader, you've not once again forgotten Allan Bosnan?

"Yes?" Willis said uneasily, a premonition troubling him.

"Professor Baxter," Allan said. "I come here to pick you up for Reverend Smith. He didn't ask me—I just wanted to. And to help you with a little exercise."

The gargantuan student picked his knuckles up off the floor of the porch and laid a hand the size of a breadbox on Willis' shoulder. "You don't want to come," he said, "I'll just pick you up and carry you."

"Exercise?" Willis said incredulously. "Carry me? What are you talking about?"

"I never could explain things too good," Allan said apologetically. "So, sorry I gotta do this—"

Before Willis could speak or move, Allan tapped him lightly, using just the smallest part of his strength, on the jaw. Willis spun around three times, careened off a wall that had been ten feet behind him, tripped over a stool, his easy chair, the couch, brought down a lamp and a picture when he bounced off the other wall, slipped on the rug and finally slid into the coffee table. Needless to say, he remembered none of this—he had been unconscious throughout the whole trip.

WILLIS swam about in celestial ether for an eternity or two, playing kickball with the stars, chatting up a pretty planet, riding comets, but knowing neither time nor space.

When he awoke, the first thing he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

noticed was that he was on his feet—a truly strange experience after all that swimming about in outer space. Woozily, he attempted to lie down—but a large set of hands, he suddenly noticed, was gripping him firmly.

A burlap bag was over his head and it smelled *awful*.

"Deep knee bends, Professor," a voice he recognized as the large student's said to him. "You do some deep knee bends for me now."

Willis' knees buckled as the large set of hands pushed him down, then his legs straightened out again as the hands pulled him up. He got the idea; he did a few deep knee bends.

"Five, uh, uh, six, uh, uh," Willis said, "I don't, uh, uh, uh, think I, un, ungh, argh, can do, ungh, argh, blurgh, any more."

"Reverend Smith wants you to do 'em—he said it would help get the demon out. He said you should be exercised."

Willis, panting heavily, asked, "You sure, hunh, hunh, hungh, he didn't, ahugha, hooog, hooog, say exorcise?"

Willis did two more deep knee bends before the hulk he sensed beside him said, "Maybe. What's the difference?"

"When you, uh, uh, exorcise, ungh, ungh, you, ah, uh, I can't—I gotta stop. Phew!" Willis panted, gasped, sweated, choked, rasped until he had regained his breath. "Perhaps," he said at last, "you should take me to Reverend Smith—to see if this is what he really wants."

"Okay," Allan said. He grabbed Willis by the arm, forcing him to run.

Willis ran until, in exhaustion, his legs gave out.

He felt himself being hoisted into the air and draped over the monster's shoulders.

THE FELLOW carrying him opened a door as Willis returned to his senses, wondering whether he had passed out or had just fallen into an exhausted sleep. The burlap bag was still over his head.

He heard Allan exclaim, "Reverend Smith!" followed by a rustling sound as someone in the room apparently jumped up. It might have been more than one someone—but a man's voice said, "This, uh, this is not, er, what it looks like."

Willis was set down, none too gently, onto a chair.

Yes, there were definitely two people. It sounded like they were doing something with belts and snaps and zippers.

The man's voice continued, "This is our latest convert—her experience was so, so; well, so intense that she, um, like the bibilcal men of the Old Testament, rent her clothing—and mine as well . . . "

"That's right," a curiously familiar female voice said.

" . . .and then—and then she had, uh, a *stroke*, yes, a stroke. And I was giving her artificial respiration. However, Allan, I don't think you should mention this to anyone—I may be a hero, but I don't have to brag. As you can see, I've saved her life."

"Yes," Allan said.

"Would you mind telling me," the man's voice continued, gaining in authority now that it was no longer making an explanation of whatever had been going on, "who this person with the bag over his head is, and why you've brought him here?"

"It's Professor Baxter," Allan said, removing the burlap bag from Willis' head, "I got him for you."

"Henrietta Bradmorton!" Willis exclaimed. There she sat, on a dingy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mattress, still putting a T-shirt on over her bare front. Her eyes widened in surprise.

"John," she said, "what's going on? Why has Professor Baxter been brought here this way?"

"Ahhh." Smith's mouth formed a large, oblong 'O'—for he had not known that Allan had taken matters into his own hands. Certainly the montebank was more wily than Allan; he knew the lay of the land, and the lay of the law—he knew that, if he or any of his flock were caught, it could mean the end of his career.

"What's going *on* here?" Henrietta asked when Reverend Smith said no more. "John, tell me!"

"Ah, just a little over-enthusiasm, Henny. These things happen." He stepped toward Allan and pulled him aside; his whisper to the large student was angry. "You know they can throw away the key on you? We need a relative's *permission* to kidnap Baxter—we need their *written consent* to assault him. Now here you go off half-cocked—"

Allen began to burble—which is to say, tears came to his eyes and he beat his large hands on his chest and made a mournful wailing sound, but no sense could be made of what he was trying to say.

"Never mind," Reverend Smith said. "There, there. I'm sorry Allan."

"Would you mind telling me," Willis sais angrily, "what's going on here? I'd like to know, too."

Reverend Smith sighed. "We're going to try to rid you of your demon, professor."

Willis eyed Smith dubiously. "You're not going to jump on me and tear my clothes off, are you?"

"No," Smith said. "Different strokes for different folks. Allan, make yourself useful—tie Professor Baxter to the chair he's sitting in."

Dutifully, Allan tied Willis to the chair he had been sitting in.

"Henrietta," Willis pleaded, "have you gone mad? I know we're not exactly the best of neighbors, but how can you permit this to go on?"

Henrietta Bradmorton, her bright blush rapidly fading, clutched Reverend Smith's arm. "I've found the way to salvation, Willis. Let Reverend Smith deliver you from your demon, and you will find the Way and be a receiver of the Lord's blessings too."

"I assure you, Henrietta, and you too Reverend Smith—there's no demon in me. I am *not* possessed." As he spoke, Willis tested his bonds. Very tight. He could turn his chair over with no trouble any time he decided that the best place for him to be was with his nose on cold concrete. In the meantime . . . "Now, come on—no harm's been done. My jaw's a little sore, but I'll forget about it. Untie me and we'll pretend this never happened. I won't call the police."

But Smith, oblivious to Willis' entreaties, was busy rumaging about in a pile of knickknacks by the toilet; grunting with satisfaction, he pulled a dull tarnished cross from a knapsack and thrust it in Willis' face. "Depart, demon, the body of this poor wretch—depart, servant of Satan!"

Willis clenched his teeth.

This whole situation he found himself in was not only ridiculous and intolerable—it was beyond belief.

I will not *call Ana*, he thought. *I've got to get out of this ludicrous mess on my own. I've gotta save my own bacon—I won't call her. I will* not.

Which proves, Gentle Reader, that pride goeth *after* the fall as well.

ANATHAE, daughter of Ptenagh,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked at the mirror in disbelief; coursing down her cheeks from misty eyes were genuine salt water tears.

Beelzebub! Demons didn't cry! Bless it all, anyway!

She grabbed a bottle of perfume and threw it against the headboard of the bed. She knuckled her eyes dry, stomped around the room for a while, kicked the bed with a hoof. She tore the sheets.

She went back to the mirror.

The tears were fresh.

She buried her head in her arms and sobbed. How ironic—and all this time she had been the cool one, always under control, always having the upper hand. She had known she had had some fond feeling for the klutz—but now she had played in the quicksand too long: it had all gone past the point of recall and it was sucking her under.

It had hit her in a local Bloomingdales; she'd been in the perfume department jockeying for position among several ordinary humans when the realization came to her. Here she was in a suburban shopping center, being so disgustingly human—and loving it because it was what an absent-minded bookish boob with chalk dust on his hands wanted of her.

For five millenia, she had thought that she had been happy at this point in her development. Willis, however, was making her grow up.

She had been called to Earth many times by many magicians—always to be used for their greedy ends. She had not minded this—indeed, she had come to expect it of humans—and had always had her own fun, granted each of them their wishes (although sometimes playing tricks on them in the process), and left.

With Willis, though, it was different. She had known that practically from the start, of course—it was the extent of the difference, her lack of control over the situation, which bothered her now.

If only, she thought, *he'd confide in me. If only he'd tell me what was bothering him, If only . . .*

But that was what the tears had been all about—that, and how glad she was that she had a human side. She wanted to reach out to Willis, to tell them how her relationship with him was throwing light into her darkness—but he wouldn't let her touch his mind. And she—except when she needed to know where he was (and even then she did not so much invade his mind as "feel out" his circumstance and mood)—had agreed to keep her distance.

Anathae threw herself on the bed in their apartment and buried her head in a pillow.

And I thought Hell could be hell, she thought.

PREVIOUSLY, John Smith's method of deprogramming had been simplicity itself. He stashed his kidnapped victim—usually a youngish boy or girl of about college age—in a hotel room with nothing to read but a mound of anti-whatever-religion literature. This rarely had any effect, but he would return to the room some time later and put it to his victim this way:

"Look, kid, your parents don't want you mixed up with this nutty mumbo-jumbo. They want you back where they can keep an eye on you—they want you back so bad they're willing to shell out a cool grand on top of my expenses for me to convince you in my subtle way that that's what you really want to do.

"Okay, it's like this. You don't like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this, I don't like this. I don't give a damn what religion you've got, what you do with your life, or what—I just want to make some bread. I can do it the hard way—read this stuff to you until you've got it coming out your ears and you don't know which way to turn. Or we can make a bargain. You go along with me, we sit here until tomorrow and watch a few good movies on the color tv, I take you to your parents, you spout a little of what you've read in this literature here to them, go back and live with them for a week or so. They give me my money—and I slip you twenty-five percent. I split. You clock some hours in your bed at home, get some of mom's apple pie warm in your stomach, they drop their guard and *you* split—with a few bucks in your pocket.

"Now, do we make a deal, or don't we?"

Most of them took it—they were outraged enough at their parents' attempts to change them. The ones who didn't, shrugging off both outrage and materialistic gain lest they have even a small setback in their spiritual development, he simply gave up on and let their parents have, taking only part of the money.

All of this lasted only about six months, for as Smith delved deeper into these religious cults that were scraping the flotsam off the vast ocean of American adolescent discontent, he discovered just how much these charlatans and shysters were raking in with a few glib words about God and Love. He could spout off about God and Love as well as anyone, maybe better—after all, he had a divinity degree, didn't he?

So he had gone into the religion business.

Only now he was back—involuntarily, to be sure—into deprogramming.

He decided to try his old tack, or at least a variation on the same. To do that, he got rid of all his observers—Henrietta to get him some holy water from the local Catholic Church, Allan to find the other members of the Receivers of the Lord—and then put it to Willis in blunt words:

"I'm not enjoying this, Professor. What I really want is to make you a well man. And yet, you don't even admit that you're sick—that you believe you're possessed by a demon."

Willis' eyebrows shot up in surprise.

"Yes, I know about your 'demon'—one of your associates let it slip. You seem to be pretty much in control of yourself, though, so my deal to you is this—you claim I kicked this demon out of your head or whatever, you give me a little lip service as a great man of religion and healing, and I'll let you go—plus cut you in for twenty-five percent of the profits. I'm a reasonable man, Professor Baxter, no crazy Charlie Manson. I just want to make some money—this is just my way of doing it and making a lot of people feel happy and fulfilled. Not such a bad goal in life, now is it?"

Willis looked at him wide-eyed. "You—you mean, you're not a fanatic?"

Scratching his ear, smiling down at him in a friendly fashion Smith confessed, "Gracious, no. I just get more attention if I act that way."

"You're not going to fall on me and tear off all my clothes?"

"No."

"Then we can talk reasonably?"

"Most certainly."

"I can't talk, tied up like this."

"Sorry," Smith said. "We have to

DIGITIZED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make our agreement first."

Willis was quiet for a while.

"Listen, friend," he said at last. "I couldn't do what you want—and it's not all integrity. I'll lay my cards on the table. The problem is, I really *do* have a demon—"

"You mean you *think* you do."

"—and if I go about renouncing her, I'll be in big trouble. My demon, you see, is half human. And I'm not possessed by her."

"First you say you *are* possessed by a demon, then you say you're *not*. Would you make up your—"

"No," Willis said. "At no point did I say I was 'possessed' by a demon—*you* said that. I said that I *had* a demon, and that's quite a different matter. And I think, I really think, that you should start thinking about the consequences of your actions. If she gets ticked off at you—"

Smith sighed and held up his hand, indicating that Willis might just as well stop talking—and so Willis did.

"I was afraid of something like this," Smith said. "Okay, sorry, professor but my course is set. I'd like to let you go, but I'm going to have to make a show of it for my bunch. Since you can't help me that way, you can just keep babbling like you were just now—and maybe I can convince you that you're not really possessed."

"I *know* I'm not really possessed—"

"Yet you say you have a demon—"

"That's right. If anything, *I* possess a demon, although I don't think of her as property, Lord knows. She does things for me. I—"

"She, 'she'—what you mean, 'she'? This demon's female?"

They were interrupted by Allan, who led Simon and Susan into the room. Simon, who had obviously heard the last part of the conversation, was saying in his zealous way, "It doesn't matter, professor, we're not afraid for the Lord is with us."

"I have to admit that I admire your bravery," Willis said to them all. "You rush in where even angels fear to tread."

"Thank you," Simon said smugly.

Susan said, "He's insulting us, Simon—don't thank him. The complete phrase is 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread'."

Allan picked Willis up, chair and all, and shook him. "Don't do that no more," he said to Willis, whose brains felt scrambled by the shaking process.

"Sure, fine, anything you say," Willis said. And inside he was screaming, *Help me, somebody. Help me! Anathae! Anathae!*

SHE KEPT TRYING to dry her tears. She had to stop thinking about it, was all, just stop thinking about Willis entirely.

. . . *Anathae* . . .

That damned lover of hers—no sooner had she decided not to think of him than it seemed she could hear him in her head. But of course, he wouldn't—

. . *Help me, somebody!* . .

It *was* Willis—he was in some sort of trouble, some people were trying to—no!

She was standing in an instant, anger boiling out of her. They wouldn't dare try to come between her and—but they would.

"I'm coming, Will," she cried. The words echoed in an empty apartment.

ALLAN set Willis and his chair back down on the floor. Simon, however, was still angry, so he walked over to the bound Willis and pulled back a balled up fist to hit him with.

The lights suddenly went out.

"Hey!" said Simon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hey!" said Smith.

"Hey!" said Allan.

Ana? Willis thought.

That's right, sweetheart, returned the demon's familiar voice in his mind. *They want to see the demon that's got you—well, they're going to.*

The only light in the room, which was pitch black despite its being daylight outside, was Willis' face, which glowed with an eerie light of its own.

Uh, Ana, he thought, *just get me out of this. No—*

Shut up, my beloved nerd. These people are going to get what they deserve—particularly this Reverend Smith.

Willis, chair and all, began to levitate. He snapped his bonds effortlessly.

Willis snorted a flame out his nose; his mouth opened and closed, not under his power, and a voice issued from him that sounded like a penny being eaten by a garbage disposal: *"You're looking for a demon. Okay, you numbskulls—here I am."*

Susan fainted.

Simon began to whimper.

Allan stood nonplussed, unable to decide what to do.

Smith ran to the door and pulled desperately at the knob—which came off, sending him sprawling onto the hard floor.

Smith got back up again, but Willis pointed a finger at him, said, "I want you, Smith," and although the charlatan attempted to keep moving, his feet seemed to be frozen where he stood.

"You must face me now and do battle," Willis said in the same voice that was sending chills running up and down *his* spine. "If you lose, I will claim your immortal soul."

Smith reached inside his jacket and pulled out the cross he had kept there. Pointing it in Willis' direction—and Willis could not help but muse how people may scoff at an idea one minute and take it all quite seriously the next—the fake Reverend said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

"Okay." Willis found himself walking around the altar and standing behind Smith. "Here I am, Smith. Now what?"

Smith twisted around, thrust the cross in Willis' face. "Out, demon!"

Willis found himself simply holding out his forefinger. Static crackled and a jagged blue-white light zapped out of the end of his finger and hit Smith.

"Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeoooooooooooooo-wwwwwwwwwwwww!" was about the way Smith put it.

"Now, Reverend," Willis heard himself saying. "Perhaps you should tell your friends here—the ones who are still conscious, anyway—who you really are and the real reason you've set up this religion."

Smith licked his lips.

Willis started to point in Smith's direction again.

"My real name is Duncan Hodgkins I'm a fake charlatan I'm just after money everything I ever said is false and I spend our collections at O'Leary's Bar and Grill and I'm sorry now *let me out of here!*"

"No way," Willis said. "There's the matter of possession of your soul."

"Er—um—wouldn't you rather have my baseball card collection?" Smith whimpered plaintively.

"You have the Willy Mays 1961 and the Mickey Mantle 1959?" Willis asked.

"Yes! Yes!" cried Smith hopefully, and he added jubilantly, "Yes!"

"Hmm. So do I. Too bad."

Willis felt Anathae leave his body; she materialized, but not in her true form. Rather, when the fire and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brimstone-specked plume of smoke that issued from the floor wafted away, there was a demon standing there such as Frank Frazetta might draw after chewing a few blotters of truly potent LSD.

To put it simply, Smith began to grovel. He begged. He pleaded. Such gnashing and grinding of teeth, such whimpering confessions and beggings for forgiveness would have put the denizens of the seventh level of the inferno to shame.

"I claim your soul!" the demon cried as it began to advance slowly, slitheringly toward Smith. "I claim your soul, Duncan Hodgkins, and will drag it kicking and screaming back into Hell with me, to consume at my leisure."

"Noooooooooo!"

"A scrap of flesh a year, a finger a century, to skewer and roast—"

Abruptly, the demon halted both its advance and its sentence and cocked its hideous head as in thought. "Hey, you wouldn't have the Cracker-jack card of Frank 'Homerun' Baker, would you?"

"I have it! I have it!" Smith cried.

"How about Honus Wagner?"

"I have that too! Over there by the cot, in my collection, in the shoebox." He pointed a trembling, hopeful finger.

The demon scratched its mottled green chin with a razor-blade claw; spiders and cockroaches, dislodged from the fungoid growths bubbling there, fell to the floor and then scampered up the scaly, bristly legs for safety.

"I'll take your entire collection," the demon said. "And if you know what's good for you, you'll get out of town."

The demon picked up the shoebox, gestured, and in a cloud of smoke which filled the room with red sparks, disappeared.

Willis disappeared at the same time.

HE WAS SO RELIEVED to be back in his own apartment that at first Willis didn't see the change. Most of all, he felt dizzy and strange and elated.

Anathae asked, "Do you notice anything?"

Willis, wondering what she was trying to call his attention to, looked about the room. The old dining set was the same, likewise the couch and his old purple easy chair. He brought his eyes back to her when he started to say, "No, have you—" then stopped.

Anathae was the same, but different; she had grown somewhat taller; her hair was longer; her face was fuller; her breasts were rounder and firmer. She was—or seemed—older.

"Eighteen, would you say, Will?" Anathae asked, turning slowly yo that he could get a good look at her. "Or nineteen, maybe?"

Willis said, "You read my mind."

"Couldn't help it, Will—we were one. There was no way I couldn't know your deepest thoughts."

Willis looked down at his scuffed shoes and bit his lip. "You're twice as beautiful, of course," he said, shaking his head. "But you shouldn't have to change for my sake."

"Will, if you'd only *told* me. My 'being' fifteen was all vanity—*my* vanity."

"You don't mind?" Willis asked.

"I can be 'younger' again, for your eyes only, any time you want. I'm going to take a shower—give me 20 minutes, okay?"

Willis acknowledged with a nod, then sat down at his desk. He pulled open a drawer and pulled out the let-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter he had drafted to Dean Smith—an application for leave to go on sabbatical. He had written it some months before; now he was certain that he was going to send it in.

It was a time for new beginnings—not merely new beginnings in his relationship with Ana. He was tired of pushing papers—he needed a sabbatical, needed to see Europe, or maybe even South America, to get away from the humdrum.

After he had signed and sealed the letter, he pulled a sublease form from one of the file slots. The soonest he could get away would be in a month, maybe two—but that didn't matter. The longest journey always begins with the first step.

He got up from the desk and walked into the bedroom while unbuttoning the sleeves to his shirt. "Did I understand you correctly to say that you read *everything* in my mind?" he asked.

"Everything," Anathae acknowledged, coming out of the shower and into the bedroom. "You believe you're in love with me and wonder if I feel the same for you."

Willis unbuttoned the front of the shirt and dropped it over the back of a chair before he asked, "And do you?"

"Love you? Would it upset you too much, Will, if I said that I don't really know?"

"I guess not," Willis smiled, remembering what he had felt in her mind not a half hour before.

"What do you mean by 'love', Will? I read your mind, but I'm still not sure. If you mean do I really care for you as a person, the answer's definitely yes. Yes, Will, I really *care* for you, because I know you care for me—not just the demon part, but the human part too. Will, I've known numerous human men—but you're the first who kept in mind the fact that I'm half human as well as half demon. The very first. The human part of me is still quite young, Will—and, until now, untouched."

"You've come of age, Ana," Willis said. He had continued his disrobing and now lay down beside her, kissing her on her warm moist mouth. "We both have."

"Make me feel human, Will."

Willis caressed her side, her knee, the inside of her thighs.

"Feels nice," she said, her eyes closed.

"Yes," he said. His mind was unable to think of anything at all, now, except how much he desired her. "Oops, your tail."

"Um. Yes."

"If you don't cut that out, I'm going to mush your mouth."

"And you expect me to cut it out?"

Willis kissed her: Gone forever was the trembling fear he had once felt when he considered their relationship; gone all feelings of ineptitude, unsureness, unworthiness. He knew he could make love to her, and that it would be a joy to them both; he knew that he should make love to her so that it would be a joy to them both; he knew he would make love to her—and so he did.

Epilog

LET US follow a sleek train leaving the Commonwealth and entering a neighboring State. It is a long train, a passenger train. This particular passenger train is equipped with berths, and in one of the uppers are Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Hodgkins.

The fact that Hodgkins was an ordained minister had worked in their favor as much as their being

(cont. on page 105)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lisa Tuttle, whose "Sangre" appeared in our June, 1977, issue, joins forces with Steven Utley to tell the story of a man who found himself—

UNCOILING

LISA TUTTLE & STEVEN UTLEY

Illustrated by JOE STATON

My DREAMS have been bothering me for the past week. The details fade almost immediately, as soon as I wake up, but, for some reason, I spend the rest of the day feeling uneasy, trying to recall them, as though they were the most important things in the world to me. I don't know why I should be so disturbed about not being able to hang on to them, but I am. I'm always tired at work now.

SOME IMPRESSIONS of last night's dream. (They're becoming a little clearer each night, a little easier to remember, and I've started putting my journal under my pillow when I go to bed.) There was a dark, cold room, torches smouldering ineffectually, dim shapes moving in the background. A man in a black hood, only his eyes and mouth showing, thrust his face into mine, shouted, sprayed me with spittle. Rotten breath. "Confess!" he screamed. "Confess, confess," on and on, forever.

Confess to what?

DREAMS, I know, are the mind's safety valve. Dreams keep us, well, most of us, from going insane. But dreams are only dreams. Everybody dreams.

Why, then, this constant dread, and why should I sometimes wake up in a rage and, other times, filled with longing, yearning, homesick for God knows what?

THE DREAMS come in daytime now. Voices, half-glimpsed faces, something moving, now revealed, now submerged, amid clouds of steamy fog. And the stench: I never thought that smells could be dreamed, so real they fill my nostrils, my throat, and I gag and choke to wakefulness.

At work today, I sat behind my desk and watched columns of familiar figures twist themselves into some strange lettering—like Arabic, I thought—which I could almost read. Something whispered behind me. Something else, in a drawer of the desk, chuckled.

My life, I suddenly thought, is no longer my own.

I left at noon, saying I was sick, and I was.

Here at the apartment, I found myself remembering a woman I had once come close to marrying. I hadn't thought of her in years, more years than I could count. We had been in love (I loved her; I thought she loved me, although we hadn't been intimate), and yet one day she came to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me and told me that she had been called. She was going to go up the hill and ask the sisters at the convent to take her in. She hoped to become a nun, bride of God but never of mine.

"My life," she had said, "is no longer my own. You don't understand that, do you, dearest? You've never known God."

"You're all I need or want to know of God," I had told her.

I sat on my narrow bed, feet thrust out before me to catch the weak rays of the sun as they sifted through the gauzy curtains, my head against the wall. Through that thin partition, I could hear the woman in the next apartment yelling at her children in Spanish. I listened to the names she called them, the crimes of which she accused them, and I had to smile at the outrageousness of both. I had seen the children. The oldest could have been no more than seven.

My sweetheart-become-nun, I realized lazily, had also spoken to me in Spanish, but hers had been a more precise, a purer and older Spanish than the neighbor woman's slurred, Americanized tongue.

Then I sat forward quickly, my head spinning with memories which couldn't have been mine. I couldn't have walked with a Spanish senorita down the narrow, cobbled streets of Seville—a Seville of centuries past.

Not real, I decided, it was some movie or novel I was recalling. I rested my elbows on my knees and let my head fall forward into my hands. I was exhausted after too many nights torn by dreams of half-seen, half-apprehended things. Dreams from which I had begun to wake with screams (in what language?) lodged in my throat.

And now these memories of other lives and times (because this vision of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Seville was not the first, there had been the man in the black hood), as clear and emotion-filled as if they were my own.

I lay back on the cot, closed my eyes and grimly clamped my teeth against the chills which moved along my body. If I went to sleep in daylight, I reasoned, perhaps the dreams wouldn't come; I'd be rested and able to think clearly again.

But I was too frightened to sleep.

I'm still frightened, and it's very late now.

I don't speak any Spanish.

LATE THIS MORNING, I awoke from the usual unrestful dream imagining that I was someone named Bruno Stahl. The telephone woke me up, somebody calling from the office to ask whether Dave Leonard felt better and planned to return to work. I almost didn't respond to that name. (Bruno Stahl?) I said no, I feel worse than ever.

BRUNO STAHL, and now Gilbert Gibbons. I napped this afternoon. I am losing my name.

Early this evening, casting about for something to do which would put me in a normal frame of mind, I unearthed a piece of last week's mail, an application for a credit card, and filled it out. I've never had trouble with forms. The data pour from my pen. I hardly have to think about what I'm writing. Leonard, David D., 512-50-9001, 11-14-48, Fort Knox KY, M, 5′ 9″, 150 lbs., brown eyes and hair, all of the vital statistics, signed (with a slight flourish) and dated.

I could do it with my eyes closed.

Only, when I looked over the form I had just completed, my eyes fastened on the neatly printed capital letters in the first blank, LEONARD, DAVID D., and I wondered, *Who? Who is this person?*

I stared at the name, trying to remember David D. Leonard, trying to recall exactly what he had to do with me, how I had come to have his application form, where he might be at the moment. Trying and failing until, at length, I pushed my chair away from the table, rose, walked about the apartment, touching his posters (prints of Modigliani, Rousseau), the spines of the paperback books on his board-and-brick shelves (Pynchon, Nabokov, names).

Finding one of his shirts carelessly draped over the back of a chair and rubbing the material of its sleeve between my fingers. Holding the garment to my nose, inhaling slowly, thoughtfully.

Walking about the apartment, returning at last to the table, where I found a hardbound book of unruled white pages, his journal. Perplexedly reading his tight, careful script.

Taking up his pen.

Waiting for him to come back and tell me what to write here.

YES, he is definitely slipping away from me now, beginning to fade like an old photograph.

Perhaps he is dying, if not as other people die, at least no less completely. I think he will soon be gone.

I found his shaving mirror and have it propped up on the table before me. I can look up from his journal and see the color going out of him. He has always been a dark person, brown hair and eyes, tanned brown skin, but he is lightening now, going from brown to a soft mocha color, like an old shirt bleaching in the sun, like old snakeskin. He has stopped going to work, stopped answering the telephone or the door bell. He will be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gone soon.

My earliest memory (no, don't stop don't rationalize just let your mind go whirling or floating or flying until it lands—like a butterfly—on):

A weed, the tight, furled end looking like some kind of miniature caterpillar, a wing of grass across its back. The little butterfly (yellow and common) had been blown sidewise by my approach, and I was left, bent over, with nothing to examine but the weed.

How clear it is, that memory. The sun was hot and tight against my back, like a shirt against my bare skin, but I wasn't sweating.

"You never sweat, Bruno," she said. "I looked around at her (Bruno again?), at the space between her teeth. Her body was bathed with perspiration, and I was covered with it, too, but she was right: I didn't sweat; the wetness on my chest and belly and thighs was from her.

She gave a startled grunt as I dropped back onto her. I began kissing her, to distract her, kissing her, and fondling her small, pale breasts. I didn't like it when such things about myself (that I didn't perspire; that I had no parents I could remember; that I couldn't, whether I wanted to or not, father children) were noticed, and I didn't even know *why* I didn't like it. I always acted, I never thought. She parted her legs, opened to receive me, and then I didn't have to think.

But I am thinking now, and (how easy it is, one thought giving birth to another; they emerge connected, like a strand of slippery beads from my insomnia-sharpened brain) I think I remember:

Standing, being made to stand, manacled to a dank stone wall, arms and legs spread, my unprotected body trembling with fear.

The room was gloomily illuminated by sputtering animal-fat torches, and stank of excrement, blood, rancid bodies.

Three men in black hoods stood before me, some sort of tribunal putting questions to me.

This was not the time of pain, not yet. One of them thrust his face into mine and shrieked at me to confess confess confess to being a witch, a wizard, a consort of Satan. They wanted me to confess of my own free will before they put me to the torture. I had the witch's mark, they told me, the brand of Satan, *confess*. But I said nothing, because I knew that it would not matter what I confessed or held fast to; these men in the black hoods and long robes had their rituals to observe. In the end, whether I broke or was broken, it was all the same to them.

So they tried to destroy me on the rack, and they used the probes and the presses, and they applied the boot and the knotted ropes and the thumbscrew.

At some point, in the red-eyed center of that eternal and endlessly varied pain, they began to murmur among themselves that perhaps no human woman had given birth to me, perhaps I was worse than a witch, some unnatural creature, a demon, some monstrous child of the devil.

They tried to banish me, drive me from my body, with spells and incantations.

Then I did leave my body, though it was the pain and not their magic which was responsible. I learned (or remembered, or intuited, or imagined) that I wasn't human and that these men couldn't kill me. I would suffer torment forever, the torment of the truly damned, for this was truly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hell.

And I heard laughter.

There was a shock, a wrenching sensation. For just a moment, I was lifted truly apart from my body. The pain receded. I looked around and saw, suspended in the ether about me, the hideous countenances of the creatures who had borne me and among whom I properly belonged. For if I had been merely human, the sight of them would surely have driven me mad.

Perhaps it did.

They were soft mountains trembling in a strange light, moist jellyfish as big as buildings, fluttering their ribbed wings, caressing me with their sticky tentacle-like appendages. When they touched me, I knew their homesickness, for this was not their rightful place. I shared their hatred for those other ones who had banished them. I felt their pride and faith in me. They spoke, their voices as harsh as the sound of old metal hinges, and they commanded me

abide
endure
await

. . . .

Somehow, I knew that there was more. The command was incomplete. I sensed that there was, there had to be a fourth, unspoken part.

Take me with you, I begged them, and they laughed again (the time is not yet right but soon soon) and sent me back into my pain-wracked human body. For a moment, I was able to bear the pain. The men who were trying to torture the demon out of me were at once right and very, very wrong. They feared Satan, and Satan, I knew now, was totally insignificant.

Then I forgot it all, just as they, those monsters dwelling somewhere beyond the stars, somewhere in exile, had intended.

Soon. Soon?

How, I wonder, did I escape?

Who ever escaped from the dungeons of the Inquisition?

I DECIDED to answer the door bell. David D. Leonard has (had) a girl friend, a pretty, soft-spoken young woman with very fair skin. Her name (I remember) is Robyn. She has come and gone. When she was here, we sat together on the sofa, silent, paying not very much attention to the television, until, after a while, she leaned toward me, put her hand on my forearm and said, Dave?

Yes? (Thinking: my name is David not Bruno David not Gilbert Juan Glen John Lyndon James my name is David D. Leonard David D.)

What is it? she wanted to know. Have I (a pause here, she was very nervous, her hand withdrew from my arm to her lap to writhe with its mate, the white fingers twisted like dying serpents; she has always been a terribly insecure woman shy easily bruised uncommonly modest) have I done something to make you (another pause, briefer than the first) angry with me?

Why no not at all what gave you that idea?

You're well I don't know you haven't called me in days you're so distant and cold you're making me feel like I should go home and (the words starting to come out of her in a rush now, she will be crying by the time she does leave) and and

and I almost said (somewhere deep inside me David D. Leonard unexpectedly stirred and rose up, weak, dying, almost dead but determined to make one last effort in spite of everything, and almost said) you don't un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

derstand my life is no longer my own (I don't understand my life is no longer

MY LIFE. my sweetheart-become-nun said. is no longer my own. You don't understand that. do you, dearest?

Not then, but. yes. I see it now. My life too. is no longer my own, has never been my own. Bruno, Gilbert, Juan. David. all of the names just names and no more, the masks of the sleeper. to be adopted and discarded in turn over the years until finally I understand. until the time is right for their return and the last part of their command may be given *emerge set us free bring us home restore to us what was ours* and somewhere within I feel tentacles uncoiling

—LISA TUTTLE & STEVEN UTLEY

The Three-Legged Chicken (cont. from page 50)

thing now, where before he could do nothing. His life was his own. After he found Judy he would seek out all the other victims of statistical variations and bring them his message of hope. He was not without a certain measure of foreboding, for he remembered Bertrand's warning that his losing streak could start up again just as quickly as it ended. But there was very little chance of that happening, he knew; the odds against it were tremendous.

Fred Walker stepped to one side—barely in time to avoid being crushed by a falling safe—and continued on down the street.

—BRAD LANG

In Medias Res (cont. from page 58)

words, and fall in love with them.

Exhausted, spent, I stagger to my bed. My mate sleeps peacefully, and I take care not to disturb her as I slip in between the sheets.

I feel . . . happy? Content? A sense of accomplishment? Sublime ecstasy?

Yes. An my tortured body drifts off into sleep.

And there, waiting for me, is my dream.

Only in this version, I write *complete* stories on my typewriter at my classroom desk.

And my neighbor is growing tomatoes.

DAVID F. BISCHOFF

Where Angela Fear to Tread (cont. from page 99)

newlyweds—as a result of both factors, they had the best upper in the car.

"What do you mean this state has special courses in that sort of thing," Henrietta is asking as she lays enscounced among the pillows. "You don't *really* believe you met up with a real demon, do you?"

"Why not?" the man who had once been known to her as John Smith asks. He pulls the sheet up over his hairy chest and sulks—after so many years of making people believe whatever impossible thing he could think up, he is now finding it hard to be believed by his own wife when telling her the God's honest truth. "I'm going to learn about demonology and exorcism. They have courses in that, you know."

"But why—even if he does have a demon—would you want to go back there? Professor Baxter will make trouble for you—for us—if we ever dare enter the Commonwealth again."

"That's just something I'll have to chance," Duncan Hodgkins said, "if I'm ever going to get my baseball cards back."

—MICHAEL F. X. MILHAUS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

ARSEN DARNAY

It wasn't like the fleece of classical times, but that didn't make it any less legendary!

Illustrated by TONY GLEESON

THE FLEECE comes from the planet of Marad and is the pelt of the storto goat. The goat skin isn't gold in hue, of course. Rather, it's a mottled reddish grey, a perfect adaptation to the desolate highlands of that impossible world. The belly portion is a whitish green and apes the dirty shade of fungus and snow on rockface and valley floor. Storto hair is stiff and tightly matted. From an angle it has a sheen. Rub it in the right direction and it has a hard, smooth feel. Rubbed against the lay, it bristles like a herd of porcupines.

The skin is not, by any measure, a soft, fluffy, yellow, smiling, cheerful pelt. *This* fleece is matter-of-factly goat skin, the outer garment of a reclusive, tough beast, the last survivor on a planet whose ecodeath lies millennia in the past. Marad is empty. The storto lives there in communion with the rock-hard fungus on which it feeds.

They call it "fleece" because of its value, real or imputed. It's extremely rare, difficult and costly of acquisition, and is said to have magical properties. But it's not clear whether the properties derive from the rarity or the rarity from the properties or whether, in fact, storto pelts have any properties at all—beyond those already described—except in the mind of the possessor.

The fleece is much in demand. It has a peculiar appeal to mankind. It stands for the recalcitrance, obduracy, and elusiveness of nature, and in a perverse sort of way men delight in the storto fleece precisely because human power has expanded to such an extent. We now claim ten thousand planets (hyperbolically, of course; the Census has the exact number). We boast dominion over the mysteries of time, predictability over myriad unknowns. Only the fleece remains—symbol of a something which still escapes our calculus. A simple, mottled pelt does the trick. Mixed in with common goat pelts at a bazaar, the idle shopper would find it hard to pick the storto from the rest.

Now in a world of such immense sophistication, skeptics about storto skin abound. Some say that the Marad Concession wraps the fleece in mystery to achieve commercial gain. You'll hear it said at cocktail parties that the Concession breeds storto in pens—like mink or Stewart or cattle, by Cosmos! Sheer nonsense to say that storto must be hunted on foot with bow and arrow, clinging to sheer rock above mile-deep crevices and such bosh! Why, some say, drinks in

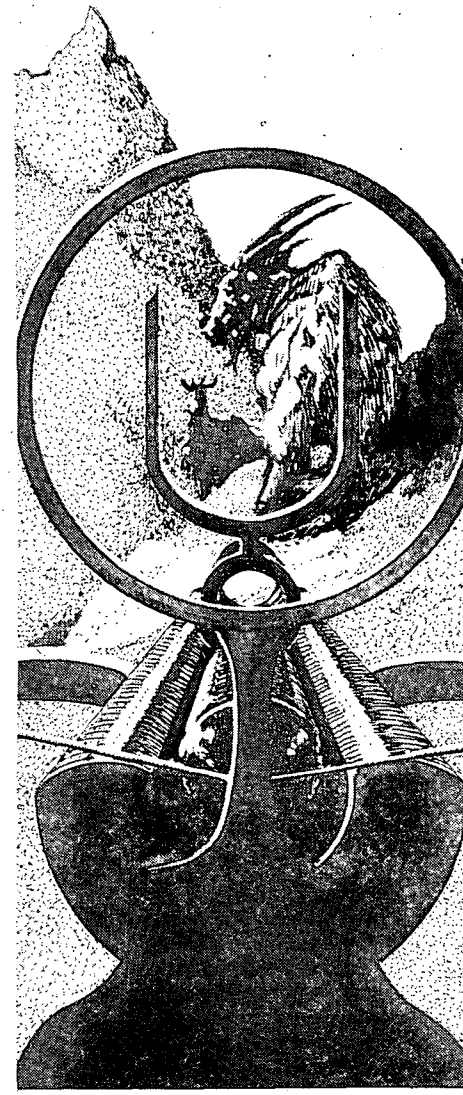
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, standing before some distinguished host's wall-mounted storto pelt, *I've* never felt any kind of vibration from this fur; and as for visions . . . nonsense, my dear fellow. Every age has its peculiar superstition, and ours has the golden fleece.

Some believe that these same men, if offered a pelt, would gladly pay the price, for it's one thing to believe the myths, another entirely to own the thing.

But the golden fleece cannot be bought, not in the ordinary course of things. The pelts pass down through generations and are tightly held. Stores don't carry the fleece, and if someone claims that he can get you one, beware of fraud.

To get a skin you must journey to Marad, equip for the hunt, spend whatever time is needed—and the time demands may be quite great—and return with a fleece obtained by direct, personal effort. The prestige of fleece ownership is great. But it's not great enough to motivate most men to go off on a goat chase. It takes money and it takes time. No wonder the fleece is rare.



ONE MAN who went off to Marad, and he might be an example of the rest, was Tamos Andy Lando. He was a tycoon in his middle years, and he used an unwelcome hiatus in a brilliant career to seek the coveted prize.

Lando was a man of his times. He saw this excursion as a project—to be planned and executed with precision and at the lowest investment in time and money. If the venture had dangerous, forbidding aspects, he felt nothing but contempt. For years he'd heard the lore about the golden fleece, the ordeal of the hunt. He knew several men who'd been to the planet and back. They struck him as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in no way superior to himself with respect to pluck, persistence, energy. He was irritated and put down by the silly admiration such people received. He could get nothing out of them about the experience, and he concluded it was all a little fishy. There was an angle, and he could find angles as well as the next one, especially now that he had time.

He had time because his empire had . . . well, for all intents and purposes his empire had collapsed. By court order he was enjoined to practice law, to consult, to be an officer of any corporation or concession for three years. He was still wealthy even as creditors ran off in all directions with pieces of his fortune. He didn't blame himself for the disaster. The political establishment he had supported, and with whose aid he had found new angles, had been swept away in a tornado of scandal. The storm left Lando exposed. His deals were legal. The judges had changed. But nothing in all this, nothing at all, had changed the basic formula of his success: his genius was still his genius. He'd clawed his way up by sheer brilliance and nerve. If left free to do it, he'd be an emperor of enterprises once again. The new order, much like the old, would settle down to seek its own advantage. The world was simple. Technical brains you could hire. Everyone else sought hungrily for a special angle from which to hoist the oyster from its shell.

He was short, stocky. He had a heavy face, a steady gaze, a friendly manner. His body type combined the convivial traits of the fat man with the driving force of the athlete. He was a leader in every respect. He could persuade and he could act. He now appeared a little boy with innocent mischief in his eyes, now the firm master of men driving masses to build some equivalent of the pyramid. His eyes could harden, smile, or plead; his hands could gesture, cajole, hold robe sleeves, form prayerfully before a client's face. Or they could jab fingers, pound tables, flip pages, dismiss aides with an imperious wave. He liked dark robes, shaved his face, and wore his black hair short.

His drive to fame and prominence had left scant time for his family. He felt no guilt in leaving them and they felt no great loss. His decision to go to Marad was announced as a footnote to a breakfast conversation. He met with his lawyers to define the limit of their powers. He asked to be consulted—no matter where the hell he was—concerning disposition of the Lybricum plantation (his first and only uncontested holding), and then he booked passage from Albert to Marad.

PLANETS LIKE Marad no longer surprise us. We have ten thousand worlds in our Galactic satchel, many like that desolate place, too forbidding for general use but not forbidding enough to write off entirely.

Marad reminds us of that obscure comment by Shad, the poet: "Good mirror, poor food."

If the technologists are right, some day geological engineering will permit Marad to bloom. Now we are still waiting (without holding our breath) for the breakthroughs.

Marad is desert—high, low. The wind sweeps over the flat table-like continental plateaus; it drops down into the valleys; it drops further, into the mountainous bowl of the ocean bed where nothing now speaks of water except the debris of ancient shells ground into chalk dust. The wind picks up the chalk and carries it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

along, screeching and wailing—a mother with a dead child. It drops it down over the continents in a mist—a bride who scatters the ashes of her beloved.

Only at the poles does life cling to the rock. Traceries of moisture dirty the valleys and adhere to stone. Lichus sucks life from the moisture and uses the sparse sun that here, where the wind seldom visits and seldom obscures the sky with dust clouds, provides a touch of light. And storto goats grate the lichus from the rock with teeth thick and raspy. And they lick the dust from the ground with hard, leathery tongues.

There are no people on Marad. Marad Station is on one of the planet's airless moons, a star-shaped cluster of buildings whose roofs resemble so many open arms spread to capture the blessed solar energy. To get to Marad Station requires a series of transfers from big to small Time Collapse liners, world to world. The last leg of the voyage is by rocket.

Lando arrived after weeks of travel and was met by naive, childish scientists eager for news of the world outside. Over dinner he noted excessive pride in the local variety of hydroponic mush. It tasted a touch more gamey than TC ship fare but was otherwise in no way different or remarkable. Concession officials were not in evidence. The scientists were shy about storto, wouldn't talk about it, but got all excited about erosion. Marad, it seemed, was the best place in Milky Way for erosion studies, a natural laboratory ready-made for grand experiments. Here in a matter of weeks effects could be observed that elsewhere required centuries. The secret of the Universe, it seemed to Lando, would be opened by the knowledge gained. He asked about valuable minerals.

The next day he was received by the Concessionaire, a guarded man who shrugged a lot. The Concessionaire didn't seem to care one way or another about Lando's quest. His favorite phrase was: "You pays your money and you takes your chance." He didn't or wouldn't say much about the "beasties," as he called them. Yep, it was dangerous. The last four men who'd gone down to hunt—in suits, of course, not bubble-cars like the scientists—hadn't come back. Probably dead, the Concessionaire averred, shrugging. You fill out these forms here, they free us of all liability; you give me your certified check from the Banco Galactico for five hundred thousand skuds. Then we'll toss you down near one of the poles.

In all this Lando got the message that the Concessionaire thought him a fool. No great awe for the golden fleece here. The office was bare and functional. No pelt on the wall; no goat-teeth on the desk set in clear plastic; not the least trace of advertising for the chief business of the Concession. Nor was it a very large or profitable Concession from all appearances, and the Concessionaire was a "little" man in terms of social status. His speech was that of the masses. He shaved when he felt like it. He didn't wear a robe but grey bib-overalls over a checkered shirt (blue-red squares). His fingernails were blunt-cut and dirty.

"What about just buying a pelt?" Lando said. "You must have some about. This is Marad Station, after all. I'd be willing to . . . say kick up the price by twenty percent. Six hundred thou. I don't insist on doing my own hunting."

The Concessionaire looked at him without expression. The Conces-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sionaire shrugged.

"No way," he said. "Ain't no way for you to get a fleece short of you go down on your own. And even then there's no guarantee you'll kill you one. Like I says, you pays your money and you takes your chance."

Lando pursued the matter, seeking an angle. He was a master of negotiation. The first stage was always an absolute no. But then, by degrees, over a period of time in which a good ear could almost hear the rise and fall of interest in the oponent's emotions, the deal would be uncovered; the mutual advantage would be revealed very slowly, as if by a hand lifting a veil from a precious object. So Lando pursued. But he found the Concessionaire unyielding, dumb. The guy didn't hear the blandishments, didn't feel the probes, repeated his monotonous dirge about money and chance. At last Lando gave up. He paid his money.

YOU HUNT storto with an arablest, a gigantic crossbow whose wire string is stretched by a little crank mounted on the bow-shaft. Into the shaft-groove fits a blunt-tipped steel bolt. The weapon has a circular sight in the back and a U-shaped guide at the tip. When the target is in the circle and lined up between the arms of the U, the bolt will hit home at a distance of two hundred meters with killing effect.

Lando had hunted from time to time—seldom for his own pleasure, nearly always as part of some business entertainment—but never with an arablest. The weapon was heavy and clumsy and it carried forward into the 31st century a disturbing echo of its medieval origins. It spoke of tensions and forces and balances of power alien to the smooth-flowing dynamics of our time. It was ponderous and awkward. He didn't know how to carry it, whether bow down or bow up. He knew himself to look ridiculous armed with a relic. The bolts were thick in a circle around his belt. They made death seem palpable, something that chemflame issuing from shiny, lightweight sporting guns hid in a quick and efficient burst of fire.

Why a crossbow? Why *not* chemflame?

To this question, as to most others, he had received no satisfactory reply. It was tradition, or some such obscurantist garble. The storto hunt—an art. The dull color of the arablest aided camouflage. Chemflame harmed the pelt (which was nonsense, of course). And on and on. The Concession clerk who'd sold him his gear had been more talkative than his shrugging chief, but the information Lando had received was equally worthless.

They dropped him down by the South Pole mountains complete with all his rigging, gear, and the ridiculous arablest. They'd agreed on a set of signals and a frequency of checks—once a week, Lando had insisted. He'd go up into the rock, pop him a goat, and get back in three days. The whole rigmarole began to annoy him. The weeks of travel to this Godforsaken place had stirred his anxieties: the best lawyers on Albert fought for his cause; they had good instructions; still, he knew from old experience that retainers never worked like the old man. Get it over with and fly home. He'd made a mistake, trekking off after a goddamned goat pelt. The cost was steep, especially if he'd have to do his own work with this . . . this thing!

The rocket ship rose and left him with mounds of bundles packed in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dark, shiny plastic.

FROM HIS CAMP in the foothills he went up into the mountains.

By the third day the press of the helmet against the cheeks had rubbed his skin raw. His growing beard itched insufferably. His oxygen gauge showed red. Despite his compass and maps, he was hopelessly lost. Panic had him. Unlike the storto he couldn't breathe the thin Marad air. He'd have to find his camp again before the oxygen ran out.

Nowhere had he seen a single storto goat, not even the flash of a grey tail disappearing into a crevice.

But in midst of this trial, even while he sought the pass that would lead him back down to his camp, the goats were on his mind day and night. He learned to hate them with a passion. Their absence was a taunt. Their presence on this planet; around, within, behind this red-grey rock; the lore connected with their pelt; the admiration heaped upon fleece-owners; all this had caused him to be here—here where no man of sense would spend a moment of time—and he resented it very much. His powers of mind and body, so well adapted to social life, gave him no aid. He felt alone, afraid. For minutes on end he cried with impotent rage, on his haunches, curled in a ball, the arablest next to him on the bare rock.

And so, when at last he found his camp again, weary and starved, his mind was filled with scheming plans. Not plans to leave Marad at once and to put this sorry business behind him; rather with plans to take his vengeance on the beasts, to shoot a herd of them or more, to leave here loaded with pelts, piles of them. In the relative security of his camp he felt strong and reckless once more. His eyes—those eyes which could harden, smile, or plead—now burned like points of light in darkness. His hands oiled the arablest with loving care. The cumbrous instrument had become his. Through that dark shaft lubricated with soft lead the blunt bolt would glide like lightning to tear the heart from the golden goat.

The next day he set out once more, a pack on his back, extra oxygen canisters hung over his rump, arablest in hand, ready for a long and murderous stay.

IT IS SAID of the golden fleece that from it emanate vibrations. No one will say what these vibrations are, and Science won't touch the subject.

The golden fleece projects a field. That's as close to a definition as you'll find. Those who know most about it have the least to say. It's all very simple, they say, and they don't say any more. The most loquacious among them will go so far as to assert that the vibrations are a matter of experience and cannot be described in words.

But those who seem least qualified to deal with the subject are much more vocal. There is a respectable literature about the fleece, with new issues out every publishing season. It was from this source that Lando had learned about the visions into which the strange vibrations are said to coalesce. Quiet meditation on the fleece causes a panorama to open in the mind. And here you'll find whole schools of thought about the postures that must be assumed, breathing techniques that aid the process, and diets that promote receptivity. A panoramic vision. "Inner Theater," one writer calls it. And against that panorama the meditator will see unfold his future possibilities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Memories of all his reading, reading which had filled the time of his TC jumps to Marad, arose over time in Lando's mind as he sought the fleece and saw no goats at all. He imagined that the goats conjured up a mysterious field to fool him, made themselves invisible to him and to his arablest, even as they scampered underfoot. Sometimes he thought he heard their reedy braying, sometimes the rasp of teeth against the lichu-covered rock. Sometimes he was convinced that there were no goats at all, that this was just a hoax to squeeze money out of wealthy fools.

He went back to replenish his supplies. He went up into the mountains again. And then he repeated the process some weeks later.

Time passed. A three-day trip to pop a goat became a three-month stay. Lando became accustomed to the planet. He lost his sense of hurry. He liked the highlands. From the peaks of the Polar Range he could see far across the landscape. He watched the wind drive chalk over the face of desolation far away. He watched the mountains, red in the sun, grey in the shade. A driving compulsion to kill a herd of goats slowly became a desire to see a single specimen, however distant. He watched canyons upon canyons and peaks upon peaks waiting in silence for a single motion in the redness, the greyness. He waited for a shape to separate itself from the crags, points, tabulations, boulders. He haunted the likely feeding places of the goats—the valleys where a bit of dirty snow survived in the shade of cliffs and where lichu discolored the walls.

He went back to replenish his supplies. He went up into the mountains again.

He was sad. The goats wouldn't show themselves to him.

THEN ONE DAY he found physical evidence of the storto goat—a lichu wall heavily rasped by teeth, the tiny pea-shaped droppings of the beasties, a single hoof-print in a patch of dusty snow.

He felt the pounding beat of unnatural excitement. He withdrew stealthily to a secluded spot. Between two boulders, from a height that overlooked the valley, on his stomach, cranked-up arablest bolt-laden by his side, he waited for the prey.

By now he was a master of waiting. The sun came and set once, twice . . . he no longer measured time in the usual way. To stare at unmoving rock, to read the obscure message of stone shapes, to reflect upon the abiding patience of sheer matter just sitting there eon after eon waiting for nothing in particular, just waiting—this had become enjoyable to him. All else seemed but the fluttering of wind down in the plain, a passion of minerals, of chalk and air.

So Lando waited. And in time the goat came, or rather, two goats, a female and a kid.

They took up a position immediately below him. He could see them both very clearly, the red-gray mottled pelts, the oblong heads, the twin horns of the mother, the little humps on the forehead of the kid.

The mother went to work on the wall. She rasped against the rock-hard fungus with long, outjutting teeth. The sound of rasping echoed in the valley. It made a rhythmic song, sweeter than Lando had heard in ages. Three rasps, a pause. Three rasps, a pause. The kid licked the lichu dust from the ground.

Lando watched, fascinated and en-

(cont. on page 130)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Bunch has been a fixture in this magazine for two decades, but it's been a while since one of his fables appeared here. Therefore it is by way of welcoming him back that we present—

MR. WHO?

DAVID R. BUNCH

I'M USED to noise. It's noisy where I live five floors up in the middle of the factory district; it's noisy where I've sweated for forty-five years at the big bolt works. But I just tuck the two little fluffy plugs into my ears and let the noise flail by, and the kind words, if any, and try to be just a good mechanism turning out those bolts. Easier that way. And after forty-five years in the middle of the factory district everything seems a little like it was seeping through two cotton balls. No! I'm not crazy . . .

But yes! there was that high whining sound again, and then a kind of jingling. Then I saw him, over by the street window, where the lightning was dancing through—looked like some robot's little kid brother, squarish and angular, not very tall, but chunky and solid seeming, except that he moved so light-tippy-toe on his round shoes. At first I thought he had striped alarm clocks on his feet, but then I saw they were just small round safety shoes with scuff marks on the toes. He carried some tools and two huge balls of cotton in hands that were like curved arrows.

"Why the cotton?" I had one eye open, I think, and then I strove with might to keep both eyes open, and I yawned. "No harm intended," I continued. "About that yawn, I mean. I'm interested. Tell me about the cotton."

But he just said, "Shhh," as he glided in closer, slightly jingling and whirring.

"Well, tell me about the tools then. And where'd ya get them fat shoes?"

He adjusted in until his tiny bolt-shaped nose was pointed dead at my face. Then he raised the nose until the circle of his twelve flat eyes smote mine. A section of the lower part of his face flapped out and I looked past black teeth into a throat that was—fire color! "It's comin'." He whispered that, and then he shivered. "Maybe I shouldn't have," he went on, "but I've had it in mind so long. And I've been in the heat and the coal dust in all those highballing towns more than my share." He wiped his box-shaped face with cotton where the sweat beads were starting to roll. But he shivered as though he were cold. To this day I've not figured how he was dressed exactly, except that he had those thick shoes on, and down to his knees a black coat that shook like soot does in a chimney. I cannot forget how he shivered, face covered with sweat.

He picked off two dabs of cotton and handed them my way. "Take these," he commanded. "You'll maybe need them. Stuff them into your ears. Everybody else seems deaf to it already, so I'll keep the rest to wipe sweat. I'm scared of what I've done."

Then he crept over to look out a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

window, fast-circling his twelve flat eyes. "Five minutes, and I figure she's going to roll. It may shake down houses. It may tear up streets. If not, I still can guarantee a scatterment of people. And quite a bit of interrelated excitement. But I'm scared." He laughed, so I didn't know whether he really was scared or just pretending. He asked me, "Do you like showdowns?"

"No—uh, no," I stammered, "not much. My knees sometimes shake, even when I'm doing my best to bluff through."

"Do you like big sounds?"

"I have no big sounds." I was calmer now. "I cannot hear them."

"Ah-ha!" He skipped back from the window. "We've got just about four minutes. Would you care to say prayers?"

"Should we? To be on the safe side? You've done something? We should prepare?"

"Yes, I've done something."

We prayed a few short ones and asked forgivenesses. He was wiping sweat all the while. "I don't know if what I've done was quite honest, so I'm sweating."

"Few things are that honest," I told him, "so quit sweating."

"Wait'll you see them white hairs whooshing back in a cold dark whimpering wind and all them coal-black dinner pails swinging by empty. Then you may not like me so much."

I clapped him on the shoulder, and it felt like hitting a bed slat in a fur coat or a bedstead wrapped in a blanket. "I like you," I said. "I admire your fat little shoes. Very much . . . "

He toyed at the shoes then, hitting at them with equipment. For equipment he seemed to have mostly the very tiniest of tiny screwdrivers and pieces of copper wire about the breadth of fine hair. "Tell me about the tools," I begged, "and the why of the red-gold metal hair. These odd minutes waiting are slow to drag over."

"There's nothing to tell about the tools and the wire. I fixed a few things, that's all." He raced over to the window, took a look quickly and raced back. "I see by the big ol' electric clock on Fidelity Bank that we've got exactly two minutes and twelve seconds, if I figured right. And if I jiggered right. —If this doesn't work, I've got some ideas about stopping sewer tubes, gas mains, water pipes and wrecking the garbage trucks. That might make a better showing." He wiped his number-cluttered face with his slim black arms and hands. "Ah City," he said, to himself and not to me, "City of time-clocked stone and sewers under. But how I can move you with just these little tools and not wreck you. Because I'm Mr.—" But I didn't catch it.

I looked for him, I flailed my arms in the air. "Mr. who?" I shouted, "Mr. who?" But he didn't say, and I couldn't see him. "Mr. who?" "One minute and twenty-some-odd-seconds," a piping voice said from somewhere near a rain-lashed window, "says Mr. Time. Then she's going to roll, and I'll see if the sweat I can squeeze out of this I brought for the ears of people was quite so necessary."

I heard a tinkling noise, like bottles sometimes sound breaking out of high-up hotel rooms in the celebration weekend nights, or like clocks many rooms away striking high hours. But I figured it was just the sounds of tiny screwdrivers and wire hitting concrete five floors below. "Mustn't be caught with the tools with which I mixed back time," I thought I heard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him say. Then I didn't hear or think I heard anything more until that noise started up that was like a thousand pieces of rolling thunder, with sort of a musical whine binding different sections of sound together. A light like a hundred big flashes of lightning came all at once together and hit my littered rooms, and two safety-toe shoes started a strange jig in the middle of the floor.

"It's working! I've pulled it! I've synchronized all those deadly time clocks and the whistles are blasting now with a call at thunder midnight. Everyone arises, jittered because he's late, scared because of time. He springs up and flies—toward the machines, races in safety-toe shoes, commandeers buses, hails taxis—the march on the big smoky works goes at midnight with empty lunch pails—nightshirts and safety-toe shoes lunge for punch handles of timecards. And everyone dies . . . In a kind of grand confusion . . . It's the end . . . The end of a world! . . . The dawn . . . the dawn . . . Between . . . Between midnight and . . . Hee ha ho—"

When I awoke I was already two hours late that morning—it was ten o'clock! The noisy square-faced little clock sitting on its tiny legs on my night table had betrayed me. For the first time in all those years. But I raced into clothes, not forgetting the safety-toe shoes, grabbed my empty lunch bucket and hurried away to save what time I could on the card. The buses on the wet rain-rinsed streets were dull sluggish things in the bright sun that morning, and the people picking their way through rubble and fallen trees were, it appeared, in no hurry at all. And they were dressed up, making it seem almost like a Sunday morning after some terrible Saturday-night storm.

—I left the bus and raced down toward black buildings resting silently. The factory guard looked dour. And he also looked surprised. I had not been late before, not once in all those years. Now, for my lateness, I would have to fill in the forms. I reached out for the blanks, to write in all the numbers I was. This gate guard, an old old man, almost as old as I am, looked at me. I shouted my name. I cried, "Please hurry! My timecard, you know. *I'm late!*"

"Mr. who?" the guard said, and his bored old eyes seemed to pity me, strangely. Then they jumped with a tired kind of mirth, and he chortled and cackled then like some fat blue rooster might in a gate guard's blue uniform, just before he started to laugh like maybe he would never stop . . .

On my way home I felt shaken concerning the guard's laughter and what he had told me about the status of the day. I stopped in at a place where a thin tall man in black clothing was ranting a fearful rant, all about calamity, all about destruction, all about Time-for-Change. According to the words seeping dimly through the cotton balls to my ears, a threat "ten million times worse than last night's terrible storm" was constantly poised over a world requiring "resurrection" and "a value-change" and "reassessment" of speed, smoke, factory time and greed for . . .

Just before I left I started to do a thing, several times, and finally I did it. I reached up to my ears and plucked out the two cotton balls I wouldn't need until tomorrow. They rolled down the aisle and toward the exit, coming together in a crack in the varnished floor where they stopped. As I stepped on them with a big

(cont. on page 132)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERE FOR JUST A WHILE

BARRY N. MALZBERG

Herewith, a fragment of sex and violence, with moral instruction . . .

I

YOU COME into the room cautiously, a little tentatively, but your confidence increases as you see that the room is indeed as you have always pictured it: the ornate furniture, the religious symbols on the walls and on the bed which dominates the room (as it would have to) the woman herself, naked, reaching for you. She bears a slight resemblance to the widow of a famous public figure, assassinated twenty years ago, and this is titillating of itself but does not obscure the aura of your feeling as you first entered the room which, for lack of more precision, might be called a great earnestness. You want to do well. It has always been very important for you to give a good account of yourself. You do not want to fail to measure up to anyone's expectations.

"Come here, X," she says, her arms outstretched, using that private, very personal name which you have given her, "come here and make love to me," and stumbling you take two, no it is three steps toward her, beginning to feel the familiar engorgement, the choked-off sensation, faint rising and then you are upon her or perhaps she is upon you, hard to tell in this sudden, metallic collision of limbs. She drags you to the bed. "Give it to me, X!" she shouts, "give me all you have!" and even more explicit obscenities which do not bear quotation, all of them surprising from a woman so delicately attractive. . .but by this time, your detachment is quite lessened. She takes clothing from you, garments fluttering like pennants in the airless spaces of the room and then you are on her, digging into her, your genitals crooked within, feeling her opening deeply. You know that you will do well, now. You know that you will measure up to all expectations.

"Ah, X, you're wonderful," she says in concurrence and wrenches into the motions of orgasm. You try to go with her, caught somewhere midway between lust and confusion as your eye catches the visage of the crucified Saviour winking at you from his portrait. . .and as between this union, you and the Saviour that is to say, the woman seems almost incidental, merely a plank of wood, a board, a means to get you from her place to His. . .but better not to consider this too far.

II

AT THE MOMENT that you are engaging in the acts and thoughts described above the man with whose wife you are copulating is in another city, stretched in an uncomfortable position

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on a building parapet, trying to aim a hand-rifle. It is the obsession of this man, for reasons which must remain private (because they are not known to me at all and barely known to him) that he can gain fame by assassinating three astronauts who are due to parade through the street four stories below in approximately a quarter of an hour. The fame will allow him to express certain political ideas which he feels to be of great interest but for which, so far, he has been unable to find an audience.

Astronauts are not what they used to be before the time of this story, but the medium-sized midwestern town in which the parade will take place is home for two of them and the parade is thus a celebration of itself. Already a good crowd has gathered on Main Street and the mayor, an officious but good-natured man, is blowing into the amplifier on the reviewing stand, little wheezing, nervous breaths, waiting for the review. In the distance the man on the parapet can hear the high school band tuning up but from this very narrow vantage point he has opened up to him little more than one arc of street, a half-moon about six yards wide through which the astronauts and their car will pass. It is ample space in which to place a killing shot, nevertheless he is nervous. What if he misses or, worse, what if he succeeds but no one is interested in his ideas?

He thinks not of his wife who at this time is committing adultery with you five hundred miles to the south-east. He is no longer romantically involved with her and has, in any case, much work to do in a small amount of time. He is under much tension and even knowledge of his wife's adultery could not change his schedule now. He is aware, of course, that his wife is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an attractive, restless woman who is in need of frequent sex or at least attention but he has not really satisfied her for several years in that way and cannot be bothered with that now. On some level he may even know that she is seeing other men. She has become accomodated to his work schedule—frequent trips out of town, weekends brooding in his study—all too easily.

The man on the parapet is a psychopath. Furthermore, his view of history is incorrect. (I must make this explicit in order that no one think that I am encouraging assassination for any reason.) He views history as a canvas stretched tautly on pegs of entropy between a past in which nothing existed and a future in which there will be no memory. On this canvas a man may draw his own version of reality which will become all that is known of this time for the future of no memory, he has theorized, and he has chosen to draw his reality with a rifle.

Already, this man has murdered seventeen people in four states. He has not been apprehended. Several of the murders have been sensational. All of them so far, however, were of private citizens or what the man chooses to think of as nonentities: this then is his first attempt to direct the future's conception of his era through the murder of people who have achieved at least a passing fame. Fight entropy with entropy. He is not only psychopathic he is, despite new insights, very nervous.

It is a bad combination, I might advise him, if he were within my range of address—these small, nervous wrenches and bubbles from the subconscious could wreck the entire, delicate framework of his psychopathology if he dwells upon them too long and render him a simple schizoid—but he would not listen anyway. He never listened. Not to anyone, not to his wife, certainly never to me. I am nothing other than a commentator and at that a minor one. A color man.

He checks the stock of his rifle, mumbles a few absent curses, pinches himself hard in the thigh for luck and as the music heightens waits patiently for the motorcade. *Oswald, Oswald,* he murmurs to encourage himself.

III

YOU, meanwhile, the true focus of this narrative, have finished copulating, have smoked your cigarette, have revolved on an elbow to gain clearance from the woman. Now you are standing on the floor, slowly dressing while you snatch greedy little glimpses. She lies there naked, her breasts like sleeper's hands falling from the sides of her body, her respiration deep and easy, one of her fingers idly touching herself while you talk to her quickly, earnestly, drawing on your clothing with small gestures. You are satisfied and yet you are not at rest. You are satiated and yet consumed with anxiety. What you are seeking, of course, is a more permanent arrangement, something on which you can depend. You tell her this.

"I'm sorry," she says, "I'm sorry, X. No commitments."

"Just once a week," you say, "or once every two weeks or even once a month. Just something that I can count on. That I can look forward to. It doesn't have to be frequent, just so that I know it's there."

You are frustrated. Your marriage and professional life have, in many ways, been disastrous (both of them are over) and you seek little pockets of stability in which you can, so to speak, leave your emotional small change. A liaison with this woman would help.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Please," you say. You feel humiliated.

"I'm sorry. No commitments. If we see each other again, if it happens that way, then we can do this or maybe we won't. It would be better to plan on nothing," she says, "once you depend on something you are trapped by it."

"I don't believe that," you say and find yourself staring again at the Saviour. He looks at you in a way both consuming and compassionate, ancient religious memories return, you think of the *Musaf* service and the bleating of the high priests. "How about next week at eleven?"

"No, X," she says again, this woman who not ten minutes ago surrounded your name with gurgles and little passionate confessions, "what I said has to be. It would be better if you left."

It would. It would definitely. Here you are, fully dressed now in this room which has turned somehow threatening and ominous, some aspect of light shifting, coming through the downed shades, catches the crucifix at the other side of the bed and makes it glisten like the deep eye of the Rabbi pondered the congregation during the President's contribution appeals. Here you are, not in a pew hungry, but nevertheless at a totally disadvantageous situation in this room in a cheap and rundown section of the city, a section into which you would normally never venture but for lust and the recommendation of a trusted friend. . .and yet, and yet you cannot leave. Some sense of unfinished business hangs almost palpably in the air. "It isn't fair," you say, "it's not like I'm asking for so much, just to know in a week, in a month—"

"You must go, X," she says, "I have another appointment." Her eyes flick open. Suddenly she seems conscious of her nakedness and protective; she reaches for a corner of the sheet, turns it up against her breast and you see her then, one breast covered, one breast naked, one nipple vanished, one nipple winking, one eye open and one eye closed. Too much. You move toward her slowly, fondling in your pocket the point thirty-two caliber Smith and Wesson which you were given permission to carry after two street robberies some months ago. Her face assumes sudden knowledge as you close upon her, the distance between you now only inches as you brace your knees in the bed.

But you simply do not know exactly what you have in mind.

IV

THE ASTRONAUTS are arguing. "When do we get to the stand?" the one who is not from this town asks, "when is this going to be over?" There is going to be a banquet in the high school gymnasium during which some award will be presented and then they will be allowed to leave, at least the one who does not come from here may leave. The other two will probably have to stay overnight and sleep with their wives and they are, consequently, in no particular rush for the ceremonies' completion.

"What do you care?" one of the hometowners says, "we went through New York, we went through Chicago, we wasted a whole week debriefing, what's a few hours in Indiana?" The car is moving at five miles an hour, little strips of colored paper floating like haze around them and like good whores (or so they think) the astronauts wave and smile as they continue talking. Their public gestures are unconscious; it has been a long time since they thought of their personna as being at all connected to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interior. "Screw it," the astronaut says. He really is in a foul mood and the tensions among them, high since the debarkation for Mars and the year and a half on expedition, have been exacerbated by their inability to get away from one another even now. "I'm not a goddamned machine."

"Now come on," the third astronaut, who takes himself to be something of a conciliator says, "stop it both of you. Let's be friends."

"I don't like his mouth," the outsider says. "He's always had a foul mouth, I had to listen to it for eighteen months out there and still he won't shut up. It's enough. It's enough of this now."

"Come on," the peacemaker says, skillfully catching a rose thrown by a young girl, "just a couple of hours and we'll be out of here. If we can give them a little pleasure and get a meal what the hell. It's better than going on the Phobos run."

"Go shove it," the outsider says. His rage is really excessive; only I know (and now you, of course) that he has had a small cerebral hemorrhage already manifested in personality changes which will, through the next few days, escalate to unconsciousness and finally death, "I've had it up to here with this." He half stands in the open limousine and waves to the crowd, simulating gaiety although the near crowd could see the strain lines in his forehead, a glisten of salivation from the corners of his mouth. "Screw this," he says.

The limousine rolls on. The driver is being paid a flat fee of fifty seven dollars to move at five miles an hour in D_2, not to listen to conversation. The band plays *Our Director*. They are, perhaps, half a block from the speaker's stand.

V

"COME ON NOW," I say to the man on the parapet as he struggles to get the proper lead. "There's no excuse for this senseless violence. It leads to nothing, it's just more breakdown and besides you don't want to kill them. You only want to get your ideas across. Why don't you write novels or buy some space in the weekly newspaper, a whole page, say? They'll pay just as much or as little attention, believe me. No one's interested in anyone's ideas any more; it's just sex or death or money or power."

He does not listen. It is doubtful that he even hears. I have already noted this: that for all the good my questions or comments do him I might as well not be there at all and in this case, of course, I am not. I do not exist other than for those who will recognize me. This sense of living within a void, this realization that I have no effect at all, would make a lesser individual doubtful, lead him, perhaps, to his own breakdown but I am of sturdier, peasant stock and do not allow this to shake my essential balance although, of course, I find it very disturbing. It is always disturbing to feel that you have no influence and no visibility, that you can in no way influence the outcome of events even when, as now, they seem to be heading toward catastrophe. Highly disturbing.

It is all that I can do to continue calm as I say, "Listen here, this is ridiculous. You've already killed seventeen which is bad enough but here you're heading into serious trouble. The death of any public figure in these times is a blow to the national psyche, media makes them all relatives and anyway, your wife is with another man. You had better watch

(cont. on page 124)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Back again from last issue's "Jackson," James Sallis tells the story of a man who has undergone–

CHANGES

JAMES SALLIS

"You will not find me. Get this sad certainty firmly into your head."
–Jean Cocteau

I SHOULD LIKE very much to begin this account by writing "When I was a child," then go on to catalogue the discoveries and anxieties of, say, an average childhood in Brighton or Hoave. This has forever seemed to me the most honest, the most direct mode of autobiographical narration; even Master Copperfield could do no better. Furthermore, it would seem that after sixty-some years I should be entitled to so small a favour. But the truth is, of course, that I never *was* a child: I was born when I was twenty years old and I was walking across the university campus at the time.

Curiously, the arrival of consciousness was some delayed, and I reeled for several minutes beneath the sudden impact of simple, pure perception: colour and motion. I am told that I dropped to my knees then fell prostrate into a nearby flowerbed, and that my eyes closed. It is generally agreed that I assumed the classic foetal position, though none of the witnesses can be certain on this point. At any rate, a student strolling back to his rooms from a class in elementary calculus was the first to come upon me. By his own testimony he stood for a moment indecisively, then walked over to ask if he might be of some assistance. It was at this very moment that consciousness beset me, and I began to wail.

The university professors were quick to take me in. Together they fed and clothed me, saw to my every need; during the days their wives would fondle me and push me in oversize prams through the park. Articles concerning my education and development appeared in every leading learned journal. Educators, psychologists and sociologists made hegiras from all about this world I was gradually coming to know, till at last it was impossible for me to leave the guarded campus grounds; such was my fame. I was given a room at the university. Domestic servants were also provided and a call to the Board of Regents on my private phones would, at any hour, produce whatever—anything—I might desire. As my education continued.

At the age of "4" I destroyed the chemical laboratory and burned the phys ed building to the ground. At "5" I killed the Dean of Arts and Sciences and successfully breached three out of the four women's dormitories. The women were subsequently expelled.

But I can recite the Canterbury Tales in the original, complete with variants, and the same with all Shakespeare. I can conjugate Latin verbs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without conscious thought while working the London *Times* crossword. I can even tell you where a staff vacancy exists in seventeenth century drama, and the manner in which Mrs. Bonfiglioni passes her time while the good Professor is leading undergraduates down some tricky path of *The Faerie Queen*.

IN AMERICA I became an artist and took a studio on Eighth Street. Commissioned to provide for the Audubon Society a statue, to be set in cement outside their national offices, I conceived a project in which the statue of a robin, ten feet high, would be composed of a substance impervious to weather and general attrition but highly sensitive to the droppings of our city's pigeons: as the pigeons frolicked on and about the statue, decorating it again and again with their droppings, the statue would slowly deteriorate, a kind of living, ever-changing sculpture. Put in place, it was an instant success, and a continual source of temptation for the community's youngsters.

FOR A TIME I was supported by women. One would feed me each night; another would replace buttons on my clothes; yet another would crouch beside me at the championship marble tournaments, cheering. I attempted to express my gratitude, feebly, with flowers and lines of verse, typing up three copies of each poem and dedicating one to each of the kind, glad ladies (It was the least I could do.) To one, on her birthday, I sent a dozen yellow roses. The roses wilted in three days, then I replaced, while she was away from the house, a single flower; it stood among the others, a lonely, bright exemplum of hope. And for more than a month I secretly replaced this rose again and again, while she marveled and brought friends around to see it, this amazing reminder.

I ARRIVED in Buffalo without money, family, or friends. The only jobs available were doughnut cooking, computer programming and bounty hunting, and since cripples brought only five dollars a head, I turned my attention to children, bagging thirty-three—all of them boys and a full two-thirds of them infants or babies—before I took my just rewards and departed with them to Canada, where I applied for a position executing draft dodgers for the United States government.

SHORTLY AFTER my misadventures in Yucatan I got a job at the New Orleans morgue, filing dead letters and performing the occasional autopsy. Working alongside me were Zipporah Grosche, who had the largest collection of perfumed letters in existence, and Clarence Culbreath, whose belts came in formfitting plastic cases and who had worked the past summer on the road gangs in order to buy his mother, who was blind, a color TV. There was also a cute little thing in a miniskirt whose name was, I believe, Edward. While working at the morgue I surpassed all previous records by resurrecting three hundred and eighteen letters. At the time I was wearing my hair long, the sides brushed back over my ears and the top flopped back over on itself like an omelette. It was difficult work—grueling, as they say—and each night in the solitude of my room I wept for the poor lost things which were in my care, but without it I could never have made a successful career in politics. I saw trouble brewing when I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grew so popular that 74.8% of the letters reaching my office were addressed to me personally; a scant few months after this began, I was dismissed by the authorities and made my way to Salt Lake City, where I began voice lessons.

AT ABOUT this time, there developed a sort of game which I played every morning. Getting out of bed with eyes still closed, I tried to decide, by touch alone, where I was; then, should I find myself in my own apartment, I would try to decide, again by touch, who the woman with me might be. If I failed at this I would ask her name, but never remained long enough to hear the answer—for immediately upon speaking I would dive from the room and flee with whatever clothing happened to hand. For some time then, I would walk in Central Park—wearing perhaps an overcoat or a miniskirt—until I summoned enough courage to call my landlady. Good Mrs. Deal would put a drinking glass against the common wall and listen. When she announced that sound had ceased, and after several calls on my part, I could generally return home safely.

I FELL in love. (This was my religious period, just before I wrote my best-selling sci-fi novel *It Came from out of Town*.) She was a *petite chose* and French major from Georgia, with rings on all her fingers and little happy smiles sitting in her eyes getting fat; her hair was drawn to one side, where, shouting for help, it cascaded back over one shoulder. We ate fried clams together at Howard Johnson's and visited the snake house at the St. Louis zoo, among other things. I was wearing my hair short and heavy workmen's boots. We both wore liederhosen, in which we hid matching copies of *The Prophet*, Scientology bulletins and leaflets proclaiming New York "A Summer Festival." I lost her to a wrangler down in Dallas on the way to Amarillo. She met him at a Macdonald's while I was washing out a few things at a nearby laundromat and I never saw her again, though for a month she telegraphed greetings every morning at five o'clock. (The delivery boy and I grew close; many mornings he stayed to breakfast with me, dissolving with his good cheer, the bright, hot pearl of hurt.) It is difficult, as she once remarked, to say no to the world champion bulldogger.

IN THE District of Columbia I was stricken with social conscience and, purchasing a wig and shaving my legs, marched with the women against the Washington monument. After demanding that the monument be sheathed in a huge pink condom we moved on to Newport, Grand Rapids and San Francisco. By day I marched and by night I studied cosmetology in a beautician's school and sculpture in a college of continuing education, studies which several months later resulted in my being appointed hairdresser to Mount Rushmore.

ONCE, having played for two seasons on a Boston pro football team, I experienced a nervous breakdown, grew unable to remember the plays, and was interned in a revolutionary new psychiatric hospital in Hartford, Conn., to which I was driven in the team's bus. It was unlike the hospitals I'd previously known in East Orange and Westchester. There was no occupational therapy, no baseball playing, not even the enjoyable bouts of bingo and square dancing with joyful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

schizophrenics in the name of recreation. Instead, the nurses wore nothing below the waist and attended small vegetable patches outside the dormitories where we slept in hammocks and dogtents pitched anew each night. The sole therapy was simple and direct: upon internment each patient was given a guitar and when he learned to play it, was discharged. Doctors roved the halls at night with cassette recorders, occasionally making trades.

FINALLY, in late 197—, I was apprehended and returned to Europe, where I settled back at the University and instituted a programme of American Studies. These several months, bored with my classes, I have had much time to think over the events of the past, which thoughts have led to my setting down these incidents by way of notes for my memoirs; meanwhile I busy myself with trying out for amateur plays, serving as second on the rowing team and, having no taste for Spenser, with Mrs. Bonfiglioni.

She of the grand imagination and large thighs, O!

—JAMES SALLIS

Here For Just A While (cont. from page 120)

yourself because this does no one any good. You didn't want it to turn out this badly, none of us really does, and right up to the irreversible moment of connection there is still time to reverse, to cut back, to turn away and if you do salvation awaits. The gates of repentance are always open. Even the High Priest cannot stand before a truly repentant sinner. I have set before you this day the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life—"

No good. No good at all, really. He continues to struggle with the rifle, preparing his lead and I can see that nothing will be done to dissuade him nor should I try further. It would only lead to my own demolition.

"Fool," I point out, anyway.

VI

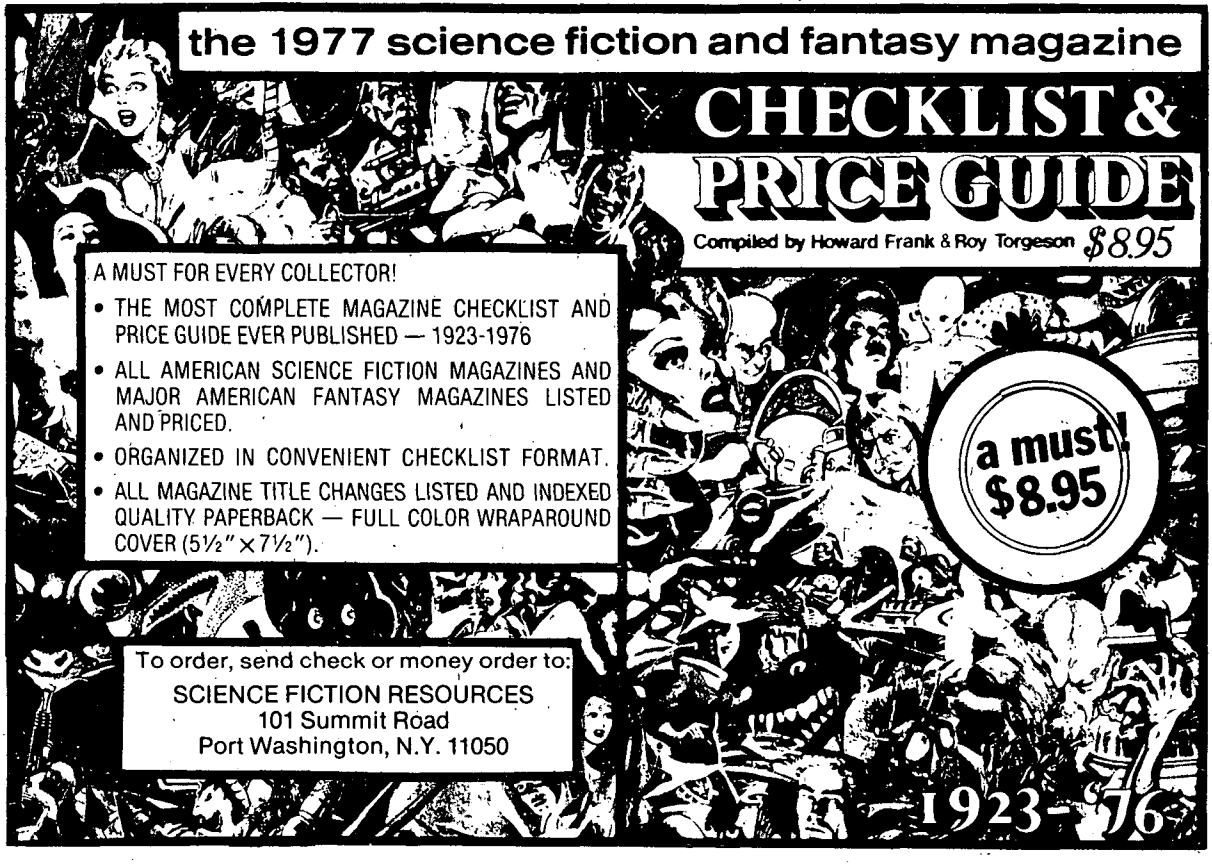
YOU STAND OVER HER and she looks back at you, the two of you linked into some network of connection thrown over both of which is everything which you and she have individually been wrung into mesh. You feel the gun within your curled hand, beating like a bird, like a prick, and she stares at the hand, then at you, her look transfixed in motion, weaving little motions but the more deeply you look within her the more profoundly she tries to stare back at you, the more you become immersed in the moment you think, the more intently you feel that hard spot of brightness between the shoulder blades. That glowing stigmata created by the Saviour and the High Priest. It expands. The blessing and the curse.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

ON SALE IN MAY AMAZING (January 19th)

SAINT FRANCE NIGHT by **GORDON EKLUND, ALL THINGS TO ALL. . .** by **MACK REYNOLDS, SIGHT OF PROTEUS** by **CHARLES SHEFFIELD, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY** by **VOL HALDEMAN, CHARIOTEER** by **STEVE MILLER, IN THE ARCADE** by **LISA TUTTLE,** and many new features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


the 1977 science fiction and fantasy magazine
CHECKLIST &
PRICE GUIDE
Compiled by Howard Frank & Roy Torgeson $8.95
A MUST FOR EVERY COLLECTOR!
• THE MOST COMPLETE MAGAZINE CHECKLIST AND PRICE GUIDE EVER PUBLISHED — 1923-1976
• ALL AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES AND MAJOR AMERICAN FANTASY MAGAZINES LISTED AND PRICED.
• ORGANIZED IN CONVENIENT CHECKLIST FORMAT.
• ALL MAGAZINE TITLE CHANGES LISTED AND INDEXED
QUALITY PAPERBACK — FULL COLOR WRAPAROUND COVER (5½" × 7½").
a must!
$8.95
To order, send check or money order to:
SCIENCE FICTION RESOURCES
101 Summit Road
Port Washington, N.Y. 11050
1923-'76

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to According to You, *Box 409, Falls Church, Va. 22046.*

Dear Ted:

Mr. Ecsedy does me the compliment of subjecting my few casual paragraphs in "Tolkien: Merlin in Tweeds" to a rigorous theological and philosophical analysis, which is like swatting a fly with a sledge hammer. Alas that circumstances do not permit me to compose a full reply!

I will only say that, first, Christian doctrines regarding grace, works, redemption, &c., are by no means so neat and consistent as he seems to imply. On the contrary, there is a wide variation amongst the doctrines of various times, places, and sects. Uniformity of creed, precariously established at Nicaea in 325, began to break down in 867, when the Patriach Photios denounced the *filioque* doctrine as heresy. The breakdown has gone on apace ever since. The same process can be seen in Islam, Buddhism, &c.

Second, I never said or implied that Lewis and Tolkien were "stupid fools" merely because I disagreed with them on some point of belief. I would never say that about anybody for that reason, especially in the field of religion, where most of the doctrines are so framed as to be incapable of scientific proof or disproof. Some of my best friends are Christians—even men of the cloth. I don't know anybody who agrees with me completely about everything, and a world of uniform belief would be a pretty dull place.

L. Sprague de Camp
Villanova, Pa. 19085

Dear Ted,

I disagree with your conclusion that Don Ecsedy's letter was "fascinating." I thought his rambling potpourri of pompous aphorisms and irrelevant allusions had the windy ineffectuality of a stale fart without having its pungency.

Viole Falushe Jr.
(no address on letter)

Dear Editor:

May I express my thanks to Mr. Don Ecsedy for his epistle (Fantastic, September 1977) commenting on L. Sprague deCamp's "White Wizard in Tweeds" (November, 1976)? Mr. Ecsedy's epistle sent me back to reread deCamp's essay on J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. This essay merits rereading, particularly the discussion that follows deCamp's description of his meeting with Tolkien (p. 85 f.) In addition, I want to commend Mr. Ecsedy for the facility he demonstrated in demolishing the straw-men he set up in his epistolary tirade. The inventiveness with which Mr. Ecsedy refashions deCamp's observations, thereby rendering them easy to dismantle, is indicative of a fictive capacity worthy of an apprentice literary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swordsman. Perhaps Mr. Ecsedy will do well turning his energies to popular fiction. He might, as Anthony Burgess does, produce novels that proclaim their author's learned determination that human action is not merely indeterminate, but also undetermined according to the divine plan of our omniscient, omnipresent God.

My personal opinion is that the "free-will-versus-determinism controversy" is moot and need not be discussed as such. Accepting that most human beings are capable of consciousness, self-consciousness, rational and rationalized planning, self-reinforcement, and self-punishment, I follow Aristotle's judgment that discussions of human behavior are necessarily more approximate and less certain than discussions of simple harmonics, or—if you will excuse the anachronism—discussions of basic Newtonian mechanics. It may be that the nearest approximations either to practitioners of total "free-will" or to people subject to complete "determinism"—take your pick—can be found on the closed wards of insane asylums.

Before I end this epistle, I should like to offer a modest rejoinder to the simplistic objections directed at people who subscribe to science and rationalism. Mr. Ecsedy attributes these objections to C.S. Lewis and says that Lewis was appalled by the "ugly and embarrassing *literalness*, with which they [rationalists and presumably scientists] used language." According to this view, scientists are unable to express their work in language or may have difficulty in doing so, because they attempt "to establish a point-to-point relationship between words and statements, and *mathematical formulations*" (italics mine). In brief, they attempt to "denude words of their meaning."

The argument above underrates mathematics. Mathematical expressions, like natural human languages, have beauty and are capable both of making precise notations and of expressing great complexities. I would be surprised if anyone who had experienced the pleasure—and in my case also the pain—of studying differential equations would hold a conception of scientific, mathematical expression so primitive as that attributed to Lewis by Mr. Ecsedy. In saying this, I may be underestimating the ability of people to compartmentalize and thus prevent the contact of their knowledge and experience with their opinions. The term *mathematical formulation* as it appears in "Lewis' view" above, seems to mean something along the order of "1 cabbage + 1 cucumber = 2 vegetables." Needless to say multi-valued concepts and analogies are hardly foreign to scientific, mathematical expression. There is more to mathematics than simple equations.

The argument that scientists misunderstand words and language underestimates scientists. Perhaps it also overrates "non-literal" people who study and write literature. As testimony for this, I offer my observation that professors of physics on the whole demonstrate an understanding of poetry as good as—if not better than—professors of English do. I apologize in advance for the following argument in which I speak ill of two who now dwell among those whom Homer refers to as the "silent majority": considering Lewis' expressions in verse and Tolkien's expressions in prose, one might well question Lewis' and Tolkien's *practical*, as opposed to theoretical, knowledge of words and written expression. Let me hasten to add that I admire most of Lewis' fiction and, even as I shudder at the frequent lapses in style, I delight in the stories told by Tolkien. By the way, Lewis was not enamored with all of Tolkien's stylistic habits either. Tolkien would not revise what others felt to be awkward sentence constructions. Because of this obstinacy, were he to be reincarnated as a freshman in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America, he well might fail English Composition 101.

Please excuse me where I have been overly harsh. I feel strongly that people who have "a calling" to set art, humanism, science, and technology at war with one another have been ill advised. Further I—like many students of language and literature—am too much concerned with the form and style of literature. Yet such concern has some justification. As poets and mathematicians know, appropriate form can contribute to both the beauty and meaningfulness of an expression.

JOHN N. THORNBURG
614 North Grant Street
Bloomington, IN 47401

Dear Editor:

Your reply to anonymous postcard in the Sept. 1977 FANTASTIC letter column contains two errors about me, the "translator." First, I never have, and never intend, to pass off published stories without warning. Three letters of mine reached you before final acceptance of the story. At least two pointedly remarked on a previous version, and publication date of 1973.

Second, you insinuate *I* sold the *other* translation. Really that hurts. I have nothing to do with that: the other version is one of the worst translations I ever read. Thus I hold that the other does *not* count in the literary sense. But its difference should have been obvious, at this late date.

JOHN W. ANDREWS
2302 E Foothill Dr
Santa Rose, CA 95404

I stand corrected. Not having the Franz Rottensteiner anthology, View From Another Shore, *to check against the version we published, and having only the unsigned postcard to go by, I jumped to the wrong conclusion. My apologies; I hope the publication of your letter here will set the matter straight.*

—TW

Dear Ted:

If this letter sounds like a diatribe, good. That's exactly what it is. I've locked myself in this cluttered vault for the sole purpose of recording a controlled fit. I don't know what I'll accomplish, but maybe my nocturnal teeth-grinding will end.

The culprit is *Galaxy*, August '77, in which Jim Baen once too often prefaces the term fantasy with a condescending "mere". The implication being that SF *is to* Fantasy what the Deity is to common mortals.

If at this point the reader yawningly assumes that I take the reverse position, go back two spaces and lose your turn. That is not the idea.

Galaxy proclaims itself an SF magazine, and under editorial requirements it clearly states: "No Fantasy". Then why in the name of Ningauble does it publish just that? Consider the April '77 issue contained "Passport For a Phoenix" by Steven Utley. In this story we have a future society, planets, starships, and a character who periodically zips off to never-never land for a quick chat with Death. Hooded robe, invisible visage, et al. Consider "Abandon All Heat, Ye Who Enter Here" by Phil Bertoni (Sept. '76). In this charming tale we have an enlightening digression on the Three Laws of Thermodynamics, Maxwell's demon-in-a-box model, and Satan, in business suit, holding a board meeting! Not to mention the selfsame August issue which boasts a character who is reincarnated umptyleven times and often chats with God in his office.

All right, Ted. You said yourself that the "borderline between SF and Fantasy is not easily defined. . ." but this is silly! Well, maybe it's my fault. What I need is an *authority*, and so, I turn to Asimov. In the latest edition of his own (it says so) magazine he states ". . . the science fiction writer has his special task. He plays the game within the rules, as the fantasy writer, the mythologist, and ordinary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liar do not? The Science Fiction writer accepts the ways of the Universe . . . and works within its bounds." And That would settle That, except he goes on to say that an SF writer can create a world out of nothing. Pretty neat trick for someone who doesn't break any rules. As for creating worlds, I'll put Newhon or Hyborea up against Dorsai any day, and spot you a rook and move. More to the point is Asimov's contention that an SF writer can anticipate the future by extrapolation. Mr. Baen, does this mean that we will carry on meaningful discussions with Death in the future? That, indeed, we will discuss the nature of our reincarnation with God? Perhaps, but you don't need to be an atheist to doubt it.

Since Mr. Asimov is no help, I guess I'll have to go it alone, and define Fantasy in this way: It requires a conscious suspension of disbelief. Now, before anyone goes screaming that this applies to all fiction, let me clarify. If you read a story that features dragons, magic, etc, most anyone would call it Fantasy. Unless, of course, the protagonist arrived via spaceship thru a 'black hole'. In the first case it's either believe or not, in the second the circumstances are explained as being an alternate universe where the natural laws no longer apply. If you can swallow this premise (as SF readers seem to) and assuming the story is well-written, disbelief is no longer an issue. In the Fantasy story there is no such prop, and disbelief must be willingly dropped in order to enjoy the story. Example: "The Temple of Abomination" by REH is a fantasy, while "Alice in Wonderland", explained away as a dream, is not.

Now, back to the point of this ramble. By this definition "Passport For a Phoenix" could be SF since the protagonist was under torture and could have been hallucinating. No such out is applicable to the other two, and so I maintain that *Galaxy* is publising hard-core Fantasy. By the same token, FANTASTIC often published SF. Cases in point are "Parker Frightened on a Tightrope", "Re-Entry", "Ocean", etc. None of the stories require the child-like faith (or gullibility, if you want to be cynical) that Fantasy does. I think *F&SF* has the right idea: Don't specify and let the reader decide. It's the easy way out.

All this would be meaningless semantics except that Mr. Baen apparently holds SF superior to Fantasy, while I think that he's erasing too many fine lines. I'm aware that my distinction between these two feuding-cousin genres probably won't hold up, but I am sure of one thing: SF took me out into space and introduced scientific marvels, while Fantasy gave me Earthsea and explained why Jefty is always five. Anyone who holds one over the other has no sense of perspective.

Well, now I feel better but nothing's settled. Mr. White, I know you don't consider probability a factor in Fantasy, so how would you define it? The contradictions are driving me buggy.

Before I shut up I'd like to say a word or several about the September issue. Jack Dann's contribution was a jewel, and if you're in any way responsible for keeping M. Milhaus' act together you've done Fantasy a great service. Still, what will he do when the Muse of Anathae departs? I'm dying to know. As for Malzburg, leaving the genre might be a good idea. Mainstream fiction deserves him. As much as I admire Lupoff, "The Whisperers" left me cold. Rock music was better treated when it was a communist plot. May Lovecraft forgive him.

I really can't say why I prefer "The Lady of Finnegan's Hearth" above the others, but perhaps it's because the story seemed to best capture the spirit of fantasy, whatever that is. It must be analogous to 'class'; Either you've got it or you don't and I know

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it when I see it. The only problem is that I don't see it enough.

RICHARD PARKS
1809 12th St
Meridian, Ms 39301

Although I can't help wondering why you didn't send your "diatribe" to Galaxy, *since that magazine inspired it, I must agree with your basic premise. I have always thought of science fiction as a narrow category within the larger category of fantasy. That is, science fiction, because it takes place in imaginary times and places, is a branch of fantasy. Fantasy embodies all literature which does not take place in the mundane reality of the world as we know it or have known it. Fantasy is the literature of imagination; science fiction circumscribes fantasy with plausibility and supplies us with "believable" explanations for what in pure fantasy would not require explanation. Science fiction is the fantasy of a rational, technology-oriented age and culture, a recent invention and, at best, only about one hundred years old, dating from the birth of the industrial revolution. The Panshins make a similar point in their* SF in Dimension *(Advent; $10), portions of which appeared here in the early 1970's. I might add, as a parenthetical note, that James Baen has left* Galaxy *and the new editor there is J. J. Pierce. He may define fantasy somewhat differently.*

—TW

The Golden Fleece (cont. from page 112)

thralled. For what seemed a very long time he hadn't seen anything living. He hadn't seen motion, direction, motive. It bubbled up in him with force, the longing to be with others, to touch, to speak, to be in company.

And so, when the goats had finished feeding and turned to go, he rose in haste from behind his boulders as a man forgotten by his companions, a strange figure in a bulky suit, a bubble-top helmet on his head.

"Wait," he cried hollowly into his mask. "Wait," he cried, waving an arm, "wait for me."

But the storto goats, alarmed by his motion, spurted forward and disappeared around a jagged face of rock.

SOME DAYS LATER Tamos Ando Lando stood by a pile of bundles packed in black, oily plastic and watched the small rocket land to pick him up. He helped the men stow the gear away. Then he went up the ladder and in.

At Marad Station, in the comforts of civilization once again, he looked at himself in the mirror and saw a wild man hidden by a black-grey beard. He combed beard and hair this way and that to give himself a semblance of decency. Then he went to have dinner with the scientists. They talked about erosion.

Lando said good-bye to the Concessionaire the next day. He paid for additional supplies the rocket had brought him during his long stay. He lingered for a bit of conversation about life on Marad Station.

In the course of that talk, suddenly a slight bit embarrassed, the Concessionaire remembered something. He asked Lando to wait for a second while he fetched it. Then he went out and returned in a moment with a TC-tele message.

"This came while you was down there," the Concessionaire said. "Came with instructions to deliver it to you no matter where you was. There was no way we could do that, though, no way."

Lando tore open and read the message. It said: *Must sell Lybricum. If*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no response in ten days will assume assent. The message was dated many standard weeks back.

"Anything serious?" the Concessionaire asked.

Lando smiled and shook his head. "Nothing at all," he said. "Nothing at all." He rose to go.

"Before you go," the Concessionaire said, "I've got a little something for you. Call it a souvenir. Come along."

He led the way in his bib-overalls down a hallway that connected two of the buildings, and through curved space-glass Lando saw the crater-rich grey surface of the Marad moon and other buildings of the star-shaped complex.

The Concessionaire stopped before a door, took out a key, unlocked it, and went into darkness. Lando followed. Then the light went on.

"Pick yourself one you like to take home with you," the man said.

Lando looked about. The room was filled with pile upon pile of golden fleece.

—ARSEN DARNAY

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of publication: Fantastic Stories
2. Date of Filing: October 1, 1977
3. Frequency of Issue: Quarterly
   A. No. of Issues Published Annually: 4
   B. Annual Subscription Price: $4.00
4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 69-62 230 St. Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y.
5. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 69-62 230 St. Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y.
6. Names and Complete Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managning Editor: Publisher—Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc., 69-62 230 St. Flushing, N.Y.; Editor: Ted White, Box 7, Flushing, N.Y.; Managing Editor: None
7. Owner: Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc., 69-62 230 St., Flushing, N.Y.; Sol Cohen, 69-62 230 St., Flushing, N.Y.; Arthur Bernhard, 5202 Casa Blanca Rd., Scottsdale, Ariz.
8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or other Securities: None
9. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates
10. Extent and Nature of Circulation

	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months
A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run)	67,470	64,982
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	19,635	22,300
2. Mail Subscriptions	1,402	1,327
C. Total Paid Circulation	21,037	23,627
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or other means, Samples, Complimentary, and other free Copies	0	0
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	21,037	23,627
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office use, left over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	840	913
2. Returns from News Agents	45,593	40,442
G. Total (Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)	67,470	64,982

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Sol Cohen, Publisher
12. For Completion by Publishers Mailing at the Regular Rates (Section 132, 121, Postal Service Manual) 39 U. S. C. 3626 provides in pertinent part: "No persons who would have been entitled to mail matter under former section 4359 of this title shall mail such matter at the rates provided under this subsection unless he files annually with the Postal Service a written request for permission to mail matter at such rates."
In accordance with the provisions of this statute, I hereby request permission to mail the publication named in Item 1 at the phased postage rates presently authorized by 39 U. S. C. 3626
Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Sol Cohen, Publisher

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

RATES AND TERMS: Classified ads of the SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE GROUP (2 books), AMAZING and FANTASTIC, afford readers and advertisers alike an opportunity to buy, sell and trade in the WORLD'S LARGEST SCIENCE FICTION Market Place at reduced rates. Only 60 cents a word (including name and address). Minimum order $6.00 (10 words). Payment must accompany copy except when ads are placed by Accredited Agency. Frequency discount 5% for 6 months, 10% for 12 months paid in advance. All copy subject to publisher's approval. Closing Date: 1st of the 5th preceding month (for example, Sept. issue closes April 1st). Send order and remittance to PRINT ADVERTISING REP. INC., 386 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

NAME the book—we'll find it for you! Out of print book specialists. All subjects. (Title alone is sufficient). Write—no obligations. Books-On-File, Dept. AMF, Union City, N.J. 07087

BOOKS READERS! Send titles wanted to: S&S Books, 80 North Wilder, A-23, St. Paul, MN. 55104

Out of print paperbacks. Send wants, SASE. McCrae, 8120 Buttonwood, Citrus Heights, CA. 95610

WANTED TO BUY—science fiction magazines from 1926 to 1960. Harry Bennett, 6763 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA. 90028

SF SWOP CLUB. Send ten paperbacks plus $2.00 receive ten Paperbacks. McCrae, 8120 Buttonwood, Citrus Heights, CA. 95610

COMPLETE illustrated catalog of all "IN Print" SF and Fantasy paperbacks and hardcover books. Over 1500 titles. No obligations. We buy "lots" collections and libraries of SF books and magazines. Send offers. Purple Unicorn Books, 4532-A10 London Road, Duluth, Minn. 55804

Science-Fantastica books—345 *items, some old & rare,* some bargains. List, $1. (A) HAMPTON BOOKS, RT 1, Box 76, Newberry, S.C. 29108.

SELLING PULPS, SHADOW, DOC SAVAGE, AMAZING, ASTOUNDING, DISNEY, EC'S, T.V. GUIDES, COMIC BOOKS, MAGAZINES, MOVIE MERCHANDISE. 1900-1977. CATALOGUES $1.00. ROGOFSKY, BOX AF1102, FLUSHING, NEW YORK 11354.

PERSONALS

DATES GALORE! Meet singles—anywhere. Call DATELINE, toll-free (800) 451-3245.

JAPANESE Girls Make Wonderful Wives. We have large number of listings. Many interested in marriage. Only $1.00 brings application, photos, names, descriptions, etc. Japan International, Box 146-SF, Carnelian Bay, California 95711.

BEAUTIFUL Mexican-Oriental girls Needing American Boy-Friends. FREE Details, "Actual" photos. World, Box 3876-SFA, San Diego, Ca. 92103

MISCELLANEOUS

Super-high-ceiling IQ test, $5, including score report. Four Sigma Society, P.O. Box 795F, Berkeley, Calif. 94701.

Let Me Show You How To
Play A Guitar the First Time You Try!
With my new, easy to use method aid and song book, you can play the very first time you try! Send only $3. to: **DEEJAY STUDIO, Box 2526, Green Bay, Wi. 54306, and get in on the fun times, right now!**

An Attorney Tells How To PLAN YOUR OWN WILL
Why delay? Receive 4 WILL FORMS and 64-pg. book, "What Everyone Should Know About Wills," written by a prominent attorney. FREE—Personal Assets Record, Duties of Executor, and Valuable Papers Folder. Complete KIT, $3.00, 2 for $5.75. Add 35¢ for postage and handling.
ESSENTIAL SERVICES, Dept. SC Box 370495, Miami, Fl. 33137

Mr. Who? (cont. from page 115)

safety-toe shoe; I thought of the little box-shaped man who had visited me in the night. And perhaps for a Sunday I laughed more than I should have at God's tall thin man ranting—speaking of danger, asking the world for change. Of course he was right! But after all those years . . . in the heart of the factory district . . . ! ?

—DAVID R. BUNCH

CASH with YOUR CAMERA!
Earn $5,000 to $15,000 yearly in spare time selling simple photos to over 4,000 eager buyers! A single photo sells—15 or more times! Easy, GUARANTEED method. Send 13¢ stamp for FREE details!
PICTURE PROFITS, Dept. SFG P.O. Box 36, East Islip, N.Y. 11730

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEST BY MAIL

Rates: Write National, Box 5, Sarasota, Fl. 33578

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

$500.00 WEEKLY! Easy, immediate home income stuffing envelopes. Free supplies! Guaranteed! Send 25¢, stamp. ALCO, B19110-BJ, Las Vegas, Nv. 89119

CASH With Your Camera! Earn $5,000-$15,000 yearly selling to 4,000 clients. Sell photos 15 or more times. Guaranteed. Free details. Pictureprofits, Dept. MJ18, Middle Island, N.Y. 11953

STUFF envelopes $550/thousand. Start immediately. Send 25c & stamped-addressed envelope. Enterprises, Box 1368-MJ3, Decatur, Ga. 30031

$250.00 PROFIT/thousand plus, possible stuffing mailing envelopes! Offer - Rush stamped addressed envelope: Universal - KN7, X16180, Fort Lauderdale, Fl. 33318

IMMEDIATE earnings stuffing envelopes. Beginner's Kit, $1.00. Lewcards, Brea, Ca. 92621

$500/WEEKLY stuffing envelopes at home! Free supplies, assistance. Enclose stamped envelope: Home Income, Box 544-T, Collinsville, Ill. 62234

WIN BIG Money Playing Exacta and Daily Double races. Juicy winners. Free details. Poe Enterprises, Box 30610, Los Angeles, Ca. 90030

COUNTERFEIT diamond rings. $3 to $8 each. Make 300% profit. Free catalog. Alphin Wholesale, 891 Bankhead, Mableton, Ga. 30059

$2000/MONTH stuffing envelopes! Free supplies, assistance. Enclose stamped envelope: Home Income, Box 544-GM, Collinsville, Ill. 62234

PERSONAL MISCELLANEOUS

WARTS. VERGO® Cream is gentle, painless, safe, easy. Hospital tested. Recommended by doctors. Use on all parts of body. Unconditionally guaranteed. Buy Vergo® at better pharmacies.

PARENTS bug you? Try Ego Power! Send $7 for instructions: Kwilloughby, Box 317, Fairacres, N.M. 88033

PHOTO ID Cards. Authentic, laminated, walletsize. Samples, catalog, send stamp and 25¢. Security-B, 2120 Paradise, Las Vegas, Nv. 89104

POSTERS giant catalog $1 refundable with order. AA Poster, Box 39, Seattle, Wa. 98125

HAVE You Lived Before This Life? Answers! $7.00 book. OCA, Box 330-S, Vacaville, Ca. 95688

INVESTIGATOR'S Manuals: Electronic Surveillance, Lock-Picking, etc. Write: Mentor, Dept. 518, 135-53 Northern Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354

YOUR Electrothought by Trees, etc. New projects, $3. Sensitron, Box 1155, St. Augustine, Fl. 32084

LONELY? Penpals, friends, dates. PVT Introductions-JP, Box 415, KCMO 64141. (816) 842-0722

CALCULATOR Lib newsletter. Information about the new arithmetic makes you overnight a Calculator-Wizard. $2.75 postpaid; satisfaction guaranteed. Technological Developments, Box 2151-C, Oxnard, Ca. 93034

SCIENCE & Religion - No conflict. Free Information. Agape, 5303 Todd, Baltimore, Md. 21206

FREE Clergy Ordination Credentials. Write: Church of The Holy Monarch, 100 Silver Beach 724-N, Daytona, Fl. 32018

DEPRESSION: The Way Out. A clear, powerful discussion for men only. $2.00 prepaid. Modlin Products, 739 Boylston, Boston, Ma. 02116

ARE YOU lonely? Photographs, descriptions, men, women. $1.25 postpaid. Ladysmith, Box 5686SF, Lighthouse Point, Fl. 33064

MERCHANDISE FOR SALE

FORMULAS $1.00 each deodorant, preshave, depilatory, brush-cleaner. Gonzer, Stag Park, Burgaw, N.C. 28425

GENUINE Alaskan gold nugget. $5.00. Guaranteed. Gaines, Box 624-GM, Kenai, Ak. 99611

ZEPPELIN, 2½ inch polished metal Zeppelin pendant on chain or pin. Your choice $3.95. Saxony, Box 875, Mokena, Ill. 60448

LOCKER Room®! Room Odorizer ("It's Driving Lovers - Loving!"). Guaranteed. Get full details today! Send $1.00 to: RAM, Box 171-BT, Merryfield, Va. 22116

JOHN and Hattie Grimes sing the best original country and gospel. Outstanding performance. Unconditionally guaranteed. 3 albums, 30 songs, 20 country, 10 gospel. Rush $10 for all. N.S.A. Records, 434 Humphreys St., Nashville, Tn. 37210

COFFEE $1.80 pound. For order form send $2.00, self addressed stamped envelope: Enterprises, 1916 State, Everett, Wa. 98201

HEALTH & BEAUTY

LONGER Real Eyelashes Secret-$8.95. 615-17 Majestic Bldg., San Antonio, Tx. 78205

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

PIANO Tuning learned quickly at home! Empire School, Box 450327, Miami, 33145

BODYMEN match paint perfect, guaranteed. Increase profits. Illustrated information. Send $2.00. Lightning Auto, Box 356, Bellaire, Oh. 43906

EARN $30,000 annually in mail order. Start immediately! Blane, 223 Hurstbourne, Louisville, Ky. 40222

$2800 ANYONE, easy, guaranteed. $3.99. Box 609, Harrisville, R.I. 02830

GOOD living, easy income. Free details plus Nature's Weight Controller. SASE. Mulch-BT, 776 Casiano, Santa Barbara, Ca. 93105

$3000.00 MONTHLY. Immediate income. Stuff envelopes at home. Information, send self-addressed stamped envelope. Cottage, Box 730-EFK, Baldwin Park, Ca. 91706

EDUCATION—INSTRUCTION—SCHOOLS

SLEEP Learning. 92% effective. Reduce tension, control habits. Details. A.S.R. Foundation, Box 23429N, Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. 33307

HIGH School Diploma at home. 2-6 weeks. State registered. Call free 1-800-327-1976. 9840 SW 77 Ave., Miami, Fla. 33156

BOOKS & CATALOGS

WHOLESALE Printing Catalog $1.00. Refundable. Monkey Town Press-GM, Minonk, Ill. 61760

RARE Bookfinder: Vantreuren, 1950 Post-108SF, San Francisco, Ca. 94115. Send wants.

HOW TO collect science fiction 1st editions. Details - $1. Lavoie's Books, 803 Parkway, Arroyo Grande, Ca. 93420

NEW TO SF? Get a good start: Best 100 list & helpful notes, $1.00. Books, 3555 W. 14th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6R 2W3 Canada

FABULOUS trick stories revealed. $1.00. Alman, Box 8205, Montgomery, Al. 36110

ASTROLOGY & OCCULT

UFOs-Ancient Astronauts? Ghosts, Loch Ness, etc. $1.00. Mysteryology Magazine, Box 6221-CE, Burbank, Ca. 91510

INVENTIONS - PATENTS

IDEAS, Inventions, New Products Wanted. IMI-MEN, 401 Wood, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW The World's Greatest Science Fiction Book Club™

GET THESE 4 ALL-TIME CLASSICS FOR ONLY $1.00

SAVE up to 40% on the world's greatest science fiction*

A $6 Value for only $1

SPACE VIKING by H. Beam Piper. An epic S.F. adventure by the internationally famous author of LITTLE FUZZY.

SWORDS AND DEVILTRY by Fritz Leiber. Includes **Ill Met in Lankhmar,** winner of the Nebula Award. The first book starring Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, the greatest heroes in the annals of fantasy.

THE V... AND C... STORIE... Dick's novel... ful no... Hugo...

EQUALITY: IN THE YEAR 2000 by Mack Reynolds. The exciting sequel to LOOKING BACKWARD, FROM THE YEAR 2000. The author was voted most popular fiction author by readers of **Galaxy**

*All selections shipped are in paperback editions.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Fans—here's a great new way to buy the books you love at terrific savings and affordable prices.

The World's Greatest Science Fiction Book Club brings you only the newest and best in S. F. and fantasy paperbacks. Books by Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, John Brunner, Robert Heinlein, Robert Silverberg, Andre Norton, and other super-popular authors. And, to start you off, we'll send you four science fiction classics for only $1 (a $5 saving on the total cover price).

SEND NO MONEY—HERE'S HOW THE CLUB WORKS:

Just return the attached coupon below. We will promptly send your introductory package of four books for just $1 (which includes postage and handling). Look them over and if you're not completely satisfied, return them within 14 days. Membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

If you decide to keep the books, every month thereafter we will automatically ship you four new titles at the low club price of $5—a saving of up to $2 off the total cover price. Every book is guaranteed hot off the press, and will reach you approximately one month before it gets to book retailers. Many have never before been published in paperback.

And what books they are! You'll receive the cream of the crop from today's top writers, many Hugo and Nebula Winners among them. Future selections will include THE PROBABILITY CORNER by Walt and Leigh Richmond; BORN UNDER MARS by John Brunner; and AFTER THINGS FELL APART by Ron Goulart.

Grosset & Dunlap, Inc. 10 Pelham Parkway FS4
Pelham Manor, N.Y. 10803

JOIN THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB AND GET THESE GREAT BENEFITS:

1. Four all-time S.F. classics for only $1 with your trial membership (a $5 saving on total cover price)
2. Four brand-new books every month—the very best in S.F. and fantasy—sent on 14-day free examination, with full return privileges
3. Savings totaling up to $2 a month off cover prices
4. No commitment or minimum number of selections to buy
5. You may cancel your membership at any time

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY.

To: THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB
Grosset & Dunlap, Inc. Dept FS4
10 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor, N.Y. 10803

Please RUSH me the introductory offer as stated in this ad on a 14 day trial basis and enroll me in The World's Greatest Science Fiction Book Club. Bill me only $1.

Name_____
(please print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

FS4

R.E. Haerle 127512F
USASA Scty. Det. Rgn. I
Box 3353
Ft. Meade, Md. 20755

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED